

Containing The Flu and Saving Your Human Resource

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It's pretty clear that after 100's of years of trying, preventing the flu isn't possible – however containing it is something different. That being said, all we can really do at this point is wait and watch and do as much as we can to contain the spread of those variations that are out there already.

Last year, the flu took a very heavy toll on U.S. business by way of lost productivity, increased health care costs and not to mention, the misery factor. At the height of last years flu season over 20% of our employees were out of work and in all likelihood your workforce was hit as hard or worse. Getting vaccinated is the best way to protect against the flu; however reducing one's exposures to the chance of getting the flu is the real intent of this article.

The items listed below are a compilation of information taken from the CDC and common sense:

- Avoid close contact with others – whether it is you or those who are ill
- When you are sick – **Stay at home**
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing – then re-read the previous point
- Wash your hands with soap and water numerous times per day and especially before you eat
- Place waste receptacles in wash rooms immediately next to the door. After washing your hands, use the paper towel when turning off the water and to grab the handle of the door. Discard the towel upon existing.
- Provide plenty of alcohol based waterless hand cleaners including disinfecting wipes for cleaning common area touch points
- Avoid objects that are frequently touched by others such as phones, keyboards, cell phones, common area microwave oven handles and touch points. If this is not practical, wash your hands immediately afterwards. This is particularly true after using restroom facilities that have manual flushing levers.
- When opening doors – lift up on those handles that allow you to do so as most people grab the topside of the handle and turn down. If you are following someone in a door, pull it open well above areas where others may have touched the door.
- When out and about in places of assembly, do not touch handrails on stairs or escalators, instead, make contact with the back of your hand or forearm for balancing is necessary. You might want to keep your gloves on if out shopping.
- Avoid direct contact with ATM buttons, use a tissue or have a glove on.
- Seriously consider replacing manual flushing levers and mechanical paper towel dispensers with presence sensing activated devices.

- Avoid shaking hands with people, however if you must, take care not to touch your mouth, eyes, nose or food. A trip to the rest room for hand washing is highly recommended.
- Do not use pens / pencils of co-workers or those offered up to the general public such as in retail establishments, banks, delivery people, etc - Carry your own pen.
- In the event you do come down with the flu, good nutrition and getting plenty of rest will help your body fight the flu and other infections
- In the event the flu does become widespread in your workforce, consider providing face masks rated N95, they are less than \$1 a piece and would be good for 1 days use.
- And most of all, remember what your mother always told you, never put money in your mouth, it's filthy – and during flu season, it may be contaminated beyond your wildest beliefs.

If you are planning on any foreign travel, you should refer to the CDC website (<http://www.cdc.gov>) concerning additional precautions to take outside of the United States.

The time is now to get a jump on containment. If someone you know comes down with the flu this season, there is a good chance they caught it by not following some of the health habits listed above. Please share this information with your workforce and your families.