

Worker Guidance

Precautions For Healthcare Workers during Flu Season

If you perform certain types of healthcare tasks for patients who may have the flu, then you may be at a higher risk of exposure to the seasonal flu virus at work. Workers who are at risk include those who perform direct patient care, aerosol-generating procedures, specimen analysis, and other patient support, like dietary and housekeeping services. These tasks can be performed in different settings such as inpatient and outpatient healthcare facilities; home healthcare settings; and health services facilities in schools, industrial workplaces, or correctional institutions. If you are one of these workers, then you need to take precautions at work to help reduce your risk of exposure to the flu virus. These precautions include using a combination of safe work practices and personal protective equipment (PPE) to reduce your exposures. The main strategies to prevent flu transmission include:

- Getting vaccinated;
- Strictly following the steps for hand hygiene and cough etiquette, and encouraging coworkers, patients, and visitors to follow them also;
- Staying home if you are ill and encouraging ill coworkers to obtain permission to leave work;
- Strictly following infection control practices at work; and
- Using the gloves and other protective equipment following the steps for putting it on and taking it off correctly.

Some Basic Precautions for All Workers



- Get vaccinated. Vaccination is the most important way to prevent the spread of the flu. For additional information about seasonal flu vaccine priorities, see [Key Facts About Seasonal Flu Vaccine](#).
- Stay at home if you are sick. The HHS/CDC recommends that workers who have a fever and respiratory symptoms stay at home until 24 hours after their fever ends (100 degrees Fahrenheit [37.8 degrees Celsius] or lower), without the use of medication. Not everyone who has the flu will have a fever. Other symptoms could include a runny nose, body aches, headache, tiredness, diarrhea, or vomiting. Note that HHS/CDC has [special](#)

[instructions](#) (PDF) for workers returning to work in areas with patients whose immune systems are severely weakened.

- Keep frequently touched common surfaces (e.g., telephones, computer equipment, etc.) clean.
- Try not to use a coworker's phone, desk, office, computer, or other work tools and equipment. If you must use a coworker's equipment, consider cleaning it first with a disinfectant.
- Stay in shape. Eat a healthy diet. Get plenty of rest, exercise, and relaxation.

Additional Precautions for Healthcare Activities

Safe Work Practices

- Use proper respiratory and cough etiquette and encourage hand washing by patients and visitors.
 - Cover your coughs and sneezes with a tissue or cough and sneeze into your upper sleeve(s). Dispose of tissues in a "no touch" wastebasket.
 - Clean your hands after coughing, sneezing, or blowing your nose.
 - Avoid touching your nose, mouth, and eyes.
- Wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds before and after contact with patients, after using PPE, and after touching contaminated surfaces; use an alcohol-based hand rub if soap and water are not available.
 - When using soap and water, rub soapy hands together for at least 20 seconds, rinse hands with water, and dry completely.
 - If soap and water are not available, use of an alcohol-based hand rub is helpful as an interim measure until hand washing is possible. When using an alcohol-based hand rub, apply liquid to palm of hand, cover all surfaces of the hands with the liquid, and rub hands together until dry.
- Check yourself for symptoms of the flu.
- Follow standard [cleaning and disinfection methods](#).

https://www.osha.gov/dts/guidance/flu/protectyourself_healthcare.html