

H1N1 Flu (Swine Flu): 10 Tips for Employers

The Department of Homeland Security has developed the following 10 tips to help employers protect employees from H1N1 flu (formerly known as swine flu). The recommendations are part of the department's [*Planning for 2009 H1N1 Influenza: A Preparedness Guide for Small Business*](#).

1. Develop policies that encourage ill workers to stay at home without fear of any reprisals.
2. Develop other flexible policies to allow workers to telework (if feasible) and create other leave policies to allow workers to stay home to care for sick family members or care for children if schools close.
3. Provide resources and a work environment that promotes personal hygiene. For example, provide tissues, no-touch trash cans, hand soap, hand sanitizer, disinfectants and disposable towels for workers to clean their work surfaces.
4. Provide education and training materials in an easy to understand format and in the appropriate language and literacy level for all employees.
5. Instruct employees who are well but who have an ill family member at home with the flu that they can go to work as usual. These employees should monitor their health every day, and notify their supervisor and stay home if they become ill. Employees who have a certain underlying medical condition or who are pregnant should promptly call their health care provider for advice if they become ill.
6. Encourage workers to obtain a seasonal influenza vaccine, if it is appropriate for them according to CDC recommendations (<http://www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/keyfacts.htm>). This helps to prevent illness from seasonal influenza strains that may circulate at the same time as the 2009 H1N1 flu.
7. Encourage employees to get the 2009 H1N1 vaccine when it becomes available (expected in October) if they are in a priority group according to CDC recommendations. For information on groups recommended for seasonal and H1N1 vaccines, please see www.flu.gov. Consider granting employees time off from work to get vaccinated when the vaccine is available in your community.
8. Provide workers with up-to-date information on influenza risk factors, protective behaviors, and instruction on proper behaviors (for example, cough etiquette; avoid touching eyes, nose and mouth; and hand hygiene).
9. Plan to implement practices to minimize face-to-face contact between workers if advised by the local health department. Consider the use of such strategies as extended use of e-mail, websites and teleconferences, encouraging flexible work arrangements (for example, telecommuting or flexible work hours) to reduce the number of workers who must be at the work site at the same time or in one specific location.
10. If an employee does become sick while at work, place the employee in a separate room or area until they can go home, away from other workers. If the employee needs to go into a common area prior to leaving, he or she should cover coughs/sneezes with a tissue or wear a facemask if available and tolerable. Ask the employee to go home as soon as possible.