

H1N1 Tips for Employers and Employees

Leeds, Grenville and Lanark is now seeing cases of pandemic (H1N1) 2009 influenza. At this time, anyone with influenza-like illness (cough and fever, and one or more of the following symptoms: sore throat, fatigue, muscle aches and/or joint aches) should be presumed to have influenza and should stay home from work. Expect sick employees to be off for 3-5 days. There is no value in encouraging employees who are ill with influenza to come to work as they will only infect fellow workers resulting in more time lost to the workplace. Employees who are well but have a sick family member at home with influenza, can still come to work but should monitor their own health each day.

Employees who have been off work with influenza can safely return to work when their fever has been absent for 24 hours (without the aid of over-the-counter medications) and they are feeling well enough to resume normal activities. A dry, lingering

cough is common with influenza and is not a sign of infectiousness. This cough may continue for days to weeks but is not a reason to exclude individuals from work in the absence of all of other symptoms. A doctor's note is not required to establish that an employee can safely return to work. If your workplace has a policy requiring employees who have been off work with an illness to obtain a note from a doctor to return to work, the Medical Officer of Health urges you to consider suspending this policy during this very unusual time. Health Care Providers' time is better spent treating patients. The Ontario Ministry of Labour has a guideline on Employment Standards with a section addressing Personal Emergency Leave that may be relevant:

http://www.labour.gov.on.ca/english/es/guide/guide_12.html

Employers can take action to prevent transmission of influenza in the workplace:

- Have hand sanitizer readily available to employees and encourage use after contact with others or frequently touched shared objects such as handrails, door knobs, keyboards.
- Keep a 2 metre distance between employees and between employees and the public. If necessary, widen the area between receptionists and the public.
- Encourage employees and the public to self-screen and stay out of the workplace if they have symptoms of influenza. This can be done with signs at the entrances. If employees become ill during the work day, encourage them to report this to a supervisor and go home.
- Encourage good cough/sneeze etiquette with signs that show proper technique.
- Ensure that washrooms are adequately stocked with soap and disposable towels if possible.
- Have a list posted of local community H1N1 immunization clinics to increase access to this information.
- Resources such as factsheets, signs and plans for pandemic preparedness and business continuity are available on the Health Unit's website: www.healthunit.org/H1N1.
Please contact the Health Unit if you have any further questions.



We work with the community to promote, protect and enhance health.

Contact us for current and accurate information on health issues that are important to you, your employees and your family:



**Health ACTION Line 1-800-660-5853 or 613-345-5685
or visit us on the web at www.healthunit.org**