

## **Pandemic Influenza Preparedness Plans**

The information is intended to assist in planning for possible communicable disease emergencies. The information gathered is current; however, further work is ongoing in this area and consequently changes, amendments and/or additions or deletions may be made. This information is not intended to cover all possible situations. Details were obtained from documents from the WHO, CDC and Saskatchewan Health Authority.

### **Introduction**

As everyone is aware the WHO and CDC has advised of the COVID-19 pandemic. Guidance materials have been developed to aid non-healthcare employees in taking actions to decrease the spread of the seasonal flu and COVID-19 virus in the workplace. Some articles may be altered when additional information comes to light as we get further into the flu season and further impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic becomes known. As of 9/29/20 it is well documented, by local health authorities that the COVID-19 pandemic is affecting our populations and communities. It is anticipated that the number of people and communities affected will continue to increase.

In response to the pandemic **Company Name** has attempted to gather information and a response strategy for its employees. It is very important that we attempt to decrease the spread of influenza and COVID-19 in the workplace and attempt to lower the impacts of the influenza and COVID-19 outbreak on and in the workplace.

### **Objectives include:**

1. Reducing transmission among staff
2. Protecting those employees at increased risk of influenza related complications from being infected with the COVID-19 virus.
3. Maintaining business operations
4. Minimizing adverse effects on others in our supply chain.

It is anticipated that there will be a wide range of disease patterns and thus we will keep you apprised of local and federal information from public health authorities as the information becomes available.

### **Parameters to be monitored include:**

1. Disease severity
2. Extent of disease
3. Amount of worker absenteeism
4. Impact of the disease on the workforce that is vulnerable and it's increased risk of complications
5. Other factors (school dismissals or closures, daycare or childcare facility closures).

Increases absenteeism is anticipated as well as increased severity of illness and increased hospitalizations. It will be imperative that **Company Name** assess the essential business functions of the company and determine at what threshold of absenteeism those functions would be threatened by the increase of absenteeism.

**Company Name** finds it is necessary to protect its workforce while ensuring continuity of operations.

As it is imperative to protect the workforce the following recommendations have been developed and a list of symptoms compiled which will aid you workforce in identifying the illness.

**Symptoms of COVID-19 include all or some of the following:**

- Fever (100°F [37.8°C] or greater)
- Chills
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Nasal congestion
- Runny nose
- Muscle and/or joint aches and pain
- Headache
- Dizziness
- Fatigue
- Conjunctivitis
- Nausea/Vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Loss of appetite (difficulty feeding children)
- Altered sense of taste or smell
- Shortness of breath
- Difficulty breathing

**Recommendations consistent with Public Health recommendations:**

1. Workers should be alert of any signs of fever and any signs of influenza-like illness before reporting to work each day and should notify their supervisor and **STAY HOME!** If ill. Employees who are ill should not travel during their illness and self-isolate. **\*ILL EMPLOYEES SHOULD STAY AT HOME.**
2. As local governments lift public health measures, you should continue to stay home and away from others if you have symptoms. If you start to develop symptoms of COVID-19, isolate yourself from others and contact your health care provider or local public health authority. Adjust your behaviours and routines based on their advice.
3. Wear a medical mask if you're ill and will be in close contact with others or need to go out to access medical care. If a medical mask isn't available, wear a non-medical mask or cloth face covering.

4. Employers should expect employees to be absent for a minimum of three to five days in most cases even if treatment has been given with antiviral medications, but in the case of potential COVID-19 exposure, it could be up to 14 days.
5. Employers should ensure that sick leave policies are flexible and consistent with public health guidance and non-punitive.
6. **DO NOT** require a doctor's note for all workers with a flu-like illness to validate their illness or return to work as the doctor's offices and medical facilities may be extremely busy and not able to provide such documentation in a timely manner.
7. Employees who are well but have an ill family member at home with influenza-like illness can go to work as usual. However, they should monitor their health on a daily basis and notify their supervisor and **STAY AT HOME IF THEY BECOME ILL**. In the case of a potential COVID-19 exposure from a family member, the worker must stay home and call 811 for further action required. The employer should maintain flexible policies to allow employees to stay at home to care for family members who are ill.
8. Sick employees at work will be asked to go home! And stay at home until they are free of fever or signs of fever ((100°F/37.8°C or greater) for a period of 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medications. Or in the case of COVID-19, once they have been cleared by a medical professional.
9. Those who become ill with symptoms "at work" should be separated from others and sent home immediately.

#### **TIPS FOR PREVENTION OF SPREAD OF COVID-19:**

##### **1. Cover coughs and sneezes!**

- a. Spread of the virus is person to person in respiratory droplets.
- b. Do NOT cough or sneeze into your hand.
- c. Cough or sneeze into a tissue or into your elbow.

##### **2. Maintain hand hygiene!**

- a. The virus may spread via contamination of the hands.
- b. Wash frequently with soap and water or use alcohol-based sanitizers.
- c. Supplies of soap and water and/or alcohol-based sanitizers should be supplied to all employees and visitors to the company premises.

##### **3. Keep surfaces and utensils clean!**

- a. Any items/articles that come into hand contact frequently should be cleaned (ie work stations, counter tops, door knobs).

##### **4. All employees should be encouraged to get vaccinated for the flu and COVID-19 when made available.**

- a. When COVID-19 vaccines become available all should be vaccinated.
- b. Vaccination sites will be controlled by the Regional Health Authority for COVID-19 vaccine.

**5. Protect employees at high risk of complications.**

- a. Pregnant females.
- b. Children less than five years of age.
- c. Adults and children with lung disease (Asthma, COPD),
- d. Heart Disease, Diabetes, diseases that decrease the immune system.
- e. All adults over 65 years of age.

**6. Prepare for increased numbers of absenteeism and plan a way to keep essential business functions operating.**

- a. Cross train employees into vital areas.
- b. Assess essential functions and reliance on these functions to maintain the company operations.

**7. Advise employees before traveling to follow these steps:**

- a. Check for fever and signs of flu-like illness.
- b. Advise about precautions to protect self.
- c. Make sure to advise supervisor if you become ill.
- d. Follow company policies regarding work and return to work.

**8. Prepare for the closure of schools or child care centres.**

**\*IN CASE OF VERY SEVERE OUTBREAK**

1. Screen all employees for symptoms of COVID-19 – fever, chills, cough, sore throat, runny nose, generalized aches and pains, headache, fatigue, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea.
  2. Consider alternate work environment for all employees at increased risk;
    - working from home to decrease the number at risk;
    - suggest early treatment with antiviral medication.
  3. Increase the social distance in the work place.
  4. Cancel all non-essential work and travel.
  6. Prepare for school dismissal or closures and day care facilities.
- Contact the Saskatchewan Health Authority for further information and latest protocols.