

County of Santa Clara

Public Health Department

Health Officer
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Cold and Flu Prevention in the Workplace – January 31, 2018

From: Sara H. Cody, MD, County of Santa Clara Health Officer

You have probably seen the news about influenza (flu) and the tragic flu deaths in our community. And yes, this year's flu season is more severe than past years, and it continues to be widespread in our community and throughout our nation.

As County employees, you have contact with clients, patients and co-workers on a daily basis and we encourage you to take actions you can take to protect your own health.

It is not too late to get a flu shot. All individuals six months of age and older, including pregnant women, should be vaccinated against influenza each year. Being vaccinated will make it less likely that you will become seriously ill and need to be hospitalized. Please contact your health care provider or Employee Health about vaccine availability.

If you are sick, stay home. Make sure you drink fluids and take medicine for fever. When you are sick you need to stay home from work until you have been symptom-free for 24 hours. If you are at [increased risk for complications from the flu](#), or if symptoms are severe or get worse, contact your medical provider. Going to work while you are sick may spread the disease, perhaps to someone who is at risk for serious complications.

Know the difference. At this time of year many people are catching cold viruses as well. Learn [what is the difference between the flu and a cold?](#)

Here is how you can **prevent the spread** of cold and flu viruses at home and at work:

- [Wash your hands thoroughly for at least 15-20 seconds](#) with soap as often as necessary, especially before eating and after using the bathroom. After washing your hands, turn off the faucet with a paper towel or your elbow and use a paper towel to open the bathroom door.
- If soap and water are not available, [use an alcohol-based hand rub](#) of at least 60% alcohol.
- Cover your cough. Sneeze and cough into a tissue by covering both your mouth and your nose. Throw the tissue away and then wash your hands. If you don't have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your elbow.
- Remind coworkers and the public to cover their cough/sneezes. Want to put up a poster? Multilingual posters available at <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/covercough.htm>
- Avoid touching your face, eyes, or rubbing your nose with your hands.
- Stay at least six feet away from individuals who are visibly ill.

Board of Supervisors: Mike Wasserman, Cindy Chavez, Dave Cortese, Ken Yeager, S. Joseph Simitian
County Executive: Jeffrey V. Smith

It is always a good idea to **practice good health habits year-round**. As the flu season continues, it even more important to take these steps to stay healthy:

- Drink plenty of water and other fluids without added sugar.
- Exercise regularly.
- Get enough sleep.
- Eat healthy foods such as whole grains, fresh fruits, and vegetables.
- Practice stress management – stress can decrease immunity, which protects you against viruses.

For more information about influenza, visit sccphd.org/flu.

Check out this [video clip](#) about a sick employee at the Florida Department of Health who refuses to go home and exposes his co-workers to disease-causing germs.

Sources: Santa Clara County Public Health Department at sccphd.org/flu
CDC at www.cdc.gov/flu