

CORPORATE WELLNESS: Preventing respiratory illnesses in the workplace

In today's fast-paced corporate world, maintaining a healthy workforce is essential for both productivity and overall wellbeing. Respiratory illnesses such as COVID-19, flu, colds, and tuberculosis (TB) can significantly impact employee health and disrupt business operations. By promoting preventative care, companies can reduce the risk of these illnesses and create a safer, healthier workplace.

What are respiratory illnesses?

Respiratory illnesses are infections that affect the respiratory system, including the nose, throat, and lungs. Common respiratory illnesses in the workplace include:

- **COVID-19:** Caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus, COVID-19 can range from mild to severe and may have long-term health implications
- **Flu:** Influenza is a contagious respiratory illness that can lead to serious complications, especially in individuals with chronic conditions
- **Colds:** Typically caused by rhinoviruses, colds are generally mild but can still affect productivity
- **Tuberculosis (TB):** A bacterial infection that primarily affects the lungs and can be severe if not treated properly

Preventative measures

As the saying goes, "prevention is better than cure." By taking proactive steps to safeguard the health of employees, businesses can foster a more resilient and efficient work environment.

Here are some preventative measures to help keep your workforce healthy:

VACCINATIONS

Encourage employees to stay up to date with vaccinations, including flu shots and COVID-19 boosters. Vaccinations are a key defence against severe illness.

HYGIENE PRACTICES

Promote regular handwashing with soap and water. Provide hand sanitisers in common areas and encourage respiratory etiquette, such as covering coughs and sneezes with tissues or elbows.

VENTILATION AND AIR QUALITY

Improve ventilation in shared workspaces to reduce the risk of airborne transmission.

CLEAN AND DISINFECT

Regularly clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces like door handles, desks, laptops, mice and phones.

HEALTH EDUCATION

Educate employees about the symptoms of respiratory illnesses and the importance of preventative measures, through internal communication channels such as emails, newsletters, posters and the intranet.

What to do when you're sick

If you start feeling unwell at work, it's important to take immediate action to prevent the spread of illness. Inform your supervisor and consider going home to rest and recover. If you must remain at work, practice good hygiene by wearing a mask, washing your hands frequently, and avoiding close contact with others. Use tissues or your elbow to cover coughs and sneezes and disinfect your workspace regularly. Prioritising your health and the health of your colleagues is essential and helps maintain a safe work environment.

Promoting employee health is not only a moral responsibility but also a strategic advantage in creating a thriving corporate culture. By prioritising corporate wellness and adopting these preventative measures, businesses can reduce the spread of respiratory illnesses and cultivate a healthier, more productive workforce.