



Your Workplace Pandemic Plan

A CHECKLIST



If your workplace does not already have a pandemic plan in place, consider putting pandemic influenza planning and prevention on the agenda of the next meeting of the joint health and safety committee or representatives. Better still, call for a special meeting to address this critical issue. Don't know where to start? The following is a list of things to consider when developing or reviewing a pandemic influenza plan.

This list is by no means exhaustive, but it should get the discussion going.

- ✓ The plan should be in writing and easily accessible to all. Its stated main goal should be to eliminate worker exposure to the infectious virus by containing the spread of the virus throughout the workplace.
- ✓ The plan should include a thorough hazard assessment, taking into account the precautionary principle as per the recommendation of the late Justice Archie Campbell in the SARS report.
- ✓ Methods of control should follow the usual hierarchy of controls: At the Source, Along the Path and as a last resort At the Worker (e.g. through engineering controls, administrative controls, work design/organization and personal protective equipment).
- ✓ To ensure workers have the knowledge and skills to reduce influenza transmission, employers must provide appropriate education and training. All training programs must be developed in consultation with and reviewed by the JHSC or health and safety representative.
- ✓ There should be provisions for communicating the plan in a clear and timely manner to all workers prior to and during the pandemic. Monitoring and communicating the status of an outbreak is also essential. Finally, stay in contact with employees who are sick at home.
- ✓ If protective equipment is deemed necessary for your workplace, the equipment must offer adequate protection to workers at risk. For example, if there is a potential for airborne transmission of serious respiratory illnesses, fit-tested N95 respirators, not surgical masks, should be provided to workers at risk. In cases of virulent illnesses, workers performing or assisting with high-risk procedures should be provided with powered air-purifying respirators (PAPR). The plan should include provisions for stockpiling of at least four weeks supply of necessary protective equipment. Training should be provided on the use, care and removal of N95 respirators and other PPE. Fit testing should take place at a minimum of every two years.
- ✓ Consider social distancing during a pandemic. Cancel the gathering of large amounts of people into one area. Explore the option of eliminating or reducing travel during a pandemic. In place of having face-to-face meetings schedule teleconferences, communicate by email and so on.
- ✓ Workers advised to work from home should be properly equipped with consideration for their health and safety.
- ✓ Where staffing numbers are reduced because of illness, measures must be in place to address these shortages and their potential to endanger worker health and safety.
- ✓ In health care settings develop measures and procedures for limiting exposure including: limiting access points in facility; active screening of entrants (screeners with appropriate personal protective equipment, including properly fitted N95 respirators); isolating patients with symptoms of respiratory illness; ensuring at least two metre distancing from symptomatic patients and use of negative pressure rooms where appropriate.
- ✓ In other workplaces where workers are in regular proximity to the public, measures to limit exposure are equally important. These might also include a two metre distance, appropriate PPE and glass or plexiglass barriers between workers and the public.
- ✓ The most important defense against the influenza virus is frequent and thorough handwashing. Provide access for workers and the public accessing the workplace to hygiene products such as sanitizers, soap, tissues and handwashing facilities with hot water.
Note: To be effective, hand sanitizers must have a minimum of 60 per cent alcohol. Avoid anti-bacterial soaps as they may contribute to the rise of resistant bacteria and endocrine disruption (e.g. reduced fertility in women and men, early puberty in girls and increases in cancers of the breast, ovaries and prostate).
- ✓ Provide psychosocial support (through an Employee Assistance Program) to workers during and after a pandemic to relieve stress and anxiety.
- ✓ Implement assessments or emergency drills to identify weak planning, training effectiveness or areas that need to be changed in the plan.
- ✓ Provide a list of resources workers can use to get more information on how to protect themselves and their families at home during a pandemic.