

The 4 Elements of a Workplace Hygiene Program



Keeping workers from getting sick is just as important as keeping them from getting hurt. When workers are out with a cold, the flu, respiratory infections or gastrointestinal illnesses, productivity can suffer. And when sick workers come in anyway, they can infect their co-workers, leading to even more absences. (Learn more about the impact of 'presenteeism' on workplaces.)

Fortunately, there are simple, inexpensive ways to help keep your staff healthy. One way is by implementing a workplace hygiene program.

As part of Kimberly-Clark's Healthy Workplace Program, it's published a paper, Hygiene: The Missing Link to Wellness, that spells out the four key elements of a workplace hygiene program:

1. Education

It's important to educate your workforce on high-risk areas and workplace hot spots for germs (such as desks, keyboards, telephones, conference rooms, break rooms and common areas) as well as how to best reduce the three biggest threats: cold, flu and stomach illness.

Employee communications should include strategic awareness tools, supportive signage, e-mails and supplemental information. (At SafetySmart.com, for example, you can get a safety talk on how hand washing can prevent common illnesses.)

2. Empowerment

Empower employees to stay healthy by providing tools such as hand sanitizers, anti-bacterial soap, surface disinfectants, antiviral tissue and washroom hand towels.

3. Engagement

Engage employees in healthy habits, such as washing, wiping and sanitizing hands. For example, hold a kickoff party or team competitions that feature incentives and giveaways to help generate interest in the hygiene program.

4. Evaluation

You should evaluate or measure the program's effectiveness through regularly scheduled swabbing and quarterly progress reports.