

Spot the Safety Violation: Proper Coughing Etiquette



It's cold and flu season. What simple thing should this worker be doing to avoid infecting other people?



Flu season is upon us. The influenza virus spreads quickly from person to person through droplets in the air, which come from our noses and mouths when we cough or sneeze. So to exercise proper cough etiquette, cover your mouth with a tissue, dispose of it as soon as possible and wash your hands immediately. Or cough into your sleeve at the crook of your arm.

By coughing into his hands, the worker in the picture is releasing the flu virus into the air. In addition, unless he washes his hands right away, he'll also spread the virus to everything he touches.

The Cost of the Flu

According to researchers from Queen's University, one-third of Canadian adults have a sore throat, a cold or the flu in any given month. And 83% of participants in a survey on work and illness say they continued to attend work or school while experiencing symptoms of an influenza-like illness.

Researchers cite direct costs due to lost productivity from colds at \$25 billion in the US. Taking into consideration both indirect (lost productivity) and direct (doctor visits and medicine) costs, the figure in the US annually is \$40 billion. And it costs employers twice as much in productivity losses for workers who come to work sick than for those who stay home.

That's why the government recommends that everyone get the flu vaccine, which is available across the country now.

You can make it easy for workers to get immunized by holding a flu clinic in your workplace. This checklist can help you plan your workplace flu vaccination clinic, promote it to workers, provide vaccines and evaluate the success of the clinic

If workers get the flu anyway, they should:

- Stay home so they don't get others sick
- Drink lots of fluids
- Get a lot of rest.

For more resources on dealing with the flu in your workplace, go to the OHS Insider's Pandemic & Flu Planning Compliance Centre.