



Flu Prevention in the Workplace

[ProvidenceHealthPlan.com](https://www.ProvidenceHealthPlan.com)

A man with glasses and a beard, wearing a green patterned shirt, is looking towards a woman with long brown hair, wearing a plaid shirt. They are both smiling and appear to be in a professional setting, possibly an office or a meeting room. The background is slightly blurred, showing office furniture and a stone wall.

Health For All is Good for Business

This toolkit is designed to support the successful implementation of a flu prevention campaign. It provides information about how to identify your population's risks, design a plan for your flu prevention initiatives, engage employees, and evaluate your campaign.

We're here to help. Contact your health management consultant or account manager for more information.



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Intro

Why Flu Prevention is important

How the flu impacts your workforce



What is the flu?

Influenza (the flu) is a contagious respiratory illness. It is caused by influenza viruses that infect the nose, throat, and sometimes, the lungs. It can cause mild to severe illness and, in some cases, lead to death.

How the flu is spread

Flu viruses commonly spread by tiny droplets made when people with the virus cough, sneeze or talk. People who are nearby can breathe in these droplets. An individual may also get the flu by touching a surface or object that has the flu virus on it – like keyboards and tables – and then touching their mouth, nose or eyes.*

Common flu symptoms include:

- Fever or chills
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Muscle or body aches
- Headaches
- Fatigue or tiredness



Economic impacts on the workforce

Increasing medical costs

The economic impact of respiratory viruses on businesses can be significant. The cost of sick leave, healthcare expenses, and a reduction in productivity can be a heavy burden – especially for smaller employers. Fortunately, there are proactive strategies employers can deploy to prevent the spread of respiratory viruses in the workplace.

*Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)



The flu's effects are far-reaching

8%

Of U.S. population gets flu each season

Flu-like illnesses lead to increased outpatient visits, hospitalizations, and even mortality

200,000

Hospitalizations per year in the U.S., on average

30,000

Deaths per year in the U.S., on average

\$83 billion

National economic burden of flu for adults

\$8.7 billion

Direct medical costs (including \$4.5 billion for hospitalizations)

Impacts to employee productivity

Sick employees lead to increased absenteeism and presenteeism, impacting productivity significantly. Employees who come to work when sick can spread the illness to coworkers.

17 million

work days lost each year

\$6.2 billion

indirect costs from lost productivity

2.8 days

of work missed for average employee from the flu

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, U.S. Department of Labor

Prevention begins with a flu shot



Protecting yourself protects everyone around you

By getting a flu shot, you can:

- ✓ Keep yourself from getting sick
- ✓ Protect people around you: friends, family, and coworkers
- ✓ Protect people you see frequently: your barista, grocery store cashier, neighbors
- ✓ Keep people who are more vulnerable to serious flu complications safe: pregnant women, babies and young children, older adults, people with certain chronic conditions



Get a flu shot annually

Flu virus strains change and vaccine protection declines over time; last year's vaccine may not protect you from getting sick. That's why it's important to get a flu shot each year. The CDC recommends a flu shot for everyone aged six months and older, with rare exceptions.

A flu shot can be especially important for:

- Individuals with chronic conditions such as asthma, diabetes, and heart disease
- Pregnant women
- Children

There are rare exceptions when you should not get a flu shot.

Talk to your primary care provider if you:

- Have an allergy to eggs and/or of the ingredients in the vaccine
- Ever had Guillain-Barré Syndrome
- Are not feeling well

Where to receive a flu shot

From on-site flu clinics to pharmacies, our goal is to make it convenient for every member to get a flu shot, especially those with busy schedules. Flu vaccines are covered in full for Providence Health Plan members.

01 On-site flu shot clinic at work

Scheduling an on-site clinic makes it convenient for employees to get their flu shot during the workday. See a list of [on-site flu shot clinic partners](#).

02 In-network pharmacies and retail clinics

Many pharmacies and walk-in clinics offer flu shots, and generally no appointment is needed.

03 Primary care provider

Members can schedule an appointment with their primary care provider.

Visit ProvidenceHealthPlan.com/FindAProvider to find in-network providers and pharmacies near you.



Preventing the flu at work



Encourage healthy habits

Practicing healthy habits can help stop the spread of germs and prevent the flu.

Encourage employees to:

- Avoid close contact and stay home when sick
- Cover their mouth and nose when coughing and sneezing
- Wash hands frequently and avoid touching their eyes, nose, and mouth
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces
- Get plenty of sleep and be physically active
- Drink plenty of water and eat nutritious foods



Launch a flu prevention campaign

As you prepare to launch a flu prevention campaign, make sure you have leadership support. Leaders play a pivotal role in creating a culture of well-being, so equip them with information and tools needed to engage their team.

In the pages that follow, we'll walk you through our step-by-step process for planning and implementing a successful flu prevention campaign. You'll learn how to:

- Identify your population's health risk
- Design a plan for your campaign
- Engage your employees
- Assess your campaign

Identify

Employee interests and health risks inform your approach

Formulate a plan by reviewing individual, organizational, and community elements that can impact well-being. Consider what's important to your workforce and how your organization and community partners can assist in flu prevention.



Employee health risks

Evaluating multiple data sources can present a clearer picture on understanding how the flu might impact your organization. Sources include:

Population demographics

Some populations like pregnant women, older adults and people with certain chronic health conditions are more vulnerable to the flu. Take note of how your organization might be impacted.

Annual health engagement reporting

Most health plans and wellness vendors provide annual health engagement reporting. Review medical claims to see how many of your employees received a flu vaccine in the past year.

Health assessment results

If you launched a health assessment campaign, review the results to see what percentage of your organization's population self-reported getting a flu vaccine in the past year.

Participation in on-site flu shot clinics

Review participation but be aware that claims might not be filed for vaccinations that occur at an on-site flu clinic, and some employees may get their flu shot at a pharmacy or their provider.

Review employee claims reporting

These reports may also provide data on the prevalence of certain chronic conditions in your population.



Your organization's orientation toward employee health

Consider how your organization currently supports employee health and identify opportunities to better support your population. Useful tools include:

Organizational scorecard

This tool offers evidence-based strategies that improve employee health. Certain resources also provide industry benchmarks. We recommend the [CDC Worksite Health Scorecard](#) and [HERO Scorecard](#).

Flu prevention workplace strategies

Learn more about how other organizations drive engagement in flu prevention. Read about best practices in the [Engage section](#) of this toolkit.



Community partners can help

Partnering with organizations in your area can improve your population's well-being.

Local, in-network healthcare partners

Interested in hosting an on-site flu shot clinic? Check out [this list](#) of Providence Health Plan recommended partners. If hosting an on-site flu shot clinic isn't right for you, remind employees that they can find nearby in-network providers, pharmacies, and clinics by using the [Providence Health Plan Provider Directory](#).



Design

Develop a plan that works best for your organization

Your earlier assessment informs what your prevention plan might need. Incorporate a variety of resources for supporting your unique population into your campaign.



Set realistic goals

Based on the data you collected, determine SMART – specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and timely – goals. Think about how you would like this campaign to impact your population and organization.

Examples to get you started:

- October through February, share monthly flu prevention education with employees via a mix of print and digital communications
- Announce a goal of reducing absenteeism during flu season by 5% over prior year; a show of commitment
- Aim for 50% employee participation in flu vaccination, measured through on-site events and medical claims



Allocate financial resources

When planning your flu prevention campaign budget, consider expenses required for implementing your initiatives, including:

- Communication materials
- Healthy habit promotional items
- On-site flu shot clinics
- Supplies like cleaning supplies, tissues, and hand sanitizer

Please see the [Getting Started with Workplace Wellness Guide](#) for budget considerations and incentive ideas. If you choose to offer a reward as part of your campaign, make sure to review any legal considerations.

Create your plan

Based on your goals and budget, outline what, when, and how success will be measured. Consider implementing a combination of programs, policies, environmental changes, and other benefits and perks. Here's an idea to get you started:

Initiative: Host an on-site flu shot clinic

- **Vendor:** LabCorp
- **Location:** Cafeteria
- **Date:** Monday, October 12
- **Time:** 2 p.m. to 5 p.m.

Goal: Achieve 35% employee participation in on-site flu shot clinic

Accountability: Well-being program manager; on-site clinic provider



Deliver a well-rounded communication plan

Effective communication is essential for informing, generating buzz, and creating enthusiasm about your program. Work with your planning committee to determine the best ways for communicating with employees – use multiple delivery channels and create messaging that resonates with your employees. Your communication plan should include:

Communication channels

Include a mix of print and digital materials. Tap into existing communication channels: email, flyers, postcards, newsletters, intranet, social media, videos, team meeting announcements, organization-wide events, new-hire onboarding/orientation, and leadership trainings.

Target audiences

Be sure your messaging and communication channels connect with the unique segments of your population.

Timeline

Create a schedule for when each communication will be sent. Start early and communicate often.

Accountability

Determine who will be accountable for creating the content and delivering each message.



Communication tips

Here are a few tips to help spread the word:

- Communicate materials that resonate with your employees and organization's culture
- Share the messages with leaders and make it easy for them to spread the information
- Utilize various communication methods
- Socialize the campaign using an organization wide event like an all staff meeting
- Consider offering incentives or promotions

Download the flu prevention communication templates in the appendix.

Engage

Communicate, activate, and modify programs & policies

Use a combination of programs, policies, environmental changes, and benefits to reinforce your organization's well-being initiatives. Adopting best practices in four key areas will ensure your flu prevention plan's success.



Incorporate best practices, aim for frequency across a variety of channels

Programs

- Launch a flu prevention communications campaign and encourage an annual flu vaccine
- Offer on-site flu shot clinics
- Promote healthy habits like eating well, staying active, getting enough sleep, and handling stress
- Encourage employees to see their doctor for annual check-ups and to stay current on screenings and vaccinations

Policies

- Allow employees to use their work time for preventive care visits, including the flu vaccine
- Provide employees with PTO for sick days, which can also be used for taking care of sick family members
- Allow flexible scheduling and remote work environments, when feasible
- Implement meeting and travel policies during flu season like reducing face-to-face meetings and avoiding travel to areas with a lot of illness

Environment

- Supply cleaning products like wipes, tissues, and hand sanitizer in common areas and at each workstation
- Install touchless soap and paper towel dispensers in restrooms and breakrooms
- Install hand sanitizer dispensers near entry to buildings and conference rooms
- Regularly clean shared areas and supplies, like break room coffee makers and refrigerators

Benefits and Perks

- Offer health care benefits that offer preventative care services, like flu shots, covered in full when service is rendered by an in-network provider or pharmacy
- Provide an incentive for participating in programs or events
- Promote healthy habits with useful items like water bottles, fitness trackers, etc.

Use multiple communication channels

The following materials will help you inform employees about the importance of flu prevention and the flu vaccine. Remember to use a variety of approaches – frequently – to help your communications reach your population.

Flu prevention communication materials

Campaign flyers

Print copies and hang in common areas, such as stairwells, elevators, restrooms, break rooms, lunch rooms, etc.



FLYER:
“Fight the flu”



FLYER:
“Is it a cold or the flu?”



FLYER:
“Protect yourself and your loved ones”

Campaign videos

Share on your organization’s intranet, social media accounts, blog, or newsletter.

Implementation strategies

Regardless of your initiatives, you're going to need help engaging employees and spreading the word.

It's important that leaders at all levels support and engage in the campaign. Involve your leadership team and well-being champions in the following ways:

- Encourage leadership and managers to lead by example by getting a flu shot and staying home when they're sick
- Your leadership team and well-being committee members should all promote your flu prevention strategies, whether that includes an on-site flu shot clinic, encouraging employees to stay home when they are sick or reminding employees to practice healthy habits
- If you're hosting an on-site flu shot clinic, recruit well-being committee members and volunteers to assist with event coordination, promotion and day-of logistics like set-up and clean-up

Consider these strategies to increase engagement for on-site flu shot clinics:

- ✓ Allow employees to receive the vaccine while on the clock
- ✓ Hold the clinic during hours that accommodate all shifts
- ✓ Invite spouses and dependents to attend
- ✓ Reach out to employees who did not attend and provide them with information on where they can receive a vaccine



Make incentives meaningful for all

If you decide to incentivize your campaign activities to drive employee engagement, remember to reward health actions that are relevant, attainable and accessible for all employees. Offer a variety of incentives to resonate with a wide-range of employees.

If you're hosting an on-site flu shot clinic, consider offering surprise drawings for people who have signed up for the event to encourage more people to register.



Plan for sustaining engagement

It's important to keep employees engaged in your campaign throughout flu season so they continue healthy habits and prevention strategies. Some people may feel safer after getting a flu shot. Still, continue to communicate the importance of regular hand washing, disinfecting surfaces, staying home when sick, and maintaining a strong immune system.

Assess

Evaluate your plan's effectiveness

It's important to determine how your flu prevention campaign worked. Did it meet its goals? Can you identify campaign strengths and opportunities for improvement? To better understand if you achieved the objectives you set for your campaign, you need to measure them. As you design your evaluation strategy, consider the following.



Participation and engagement

Reflect back on the SMART goals you set for your campaign. Your goals may have included launching communication materials, employee participation in flu vaccinations or absenteeism during flu season. Did you achieve your goals?

Participation in flu vaccines can be measured in several ways, depending on how your campaign is structured:

On-site flu shot clinic data

If you hosted an on-site flu shot clinic, ask the vendor to provide a participation report.

Annual reporting with flu vaccination claims

Providence Health Plan offers health engagement reporting. Ask your account manager or health management consultant for more information.

Health assessment results

The Providence Health Plan health assessment asks participants whether or not they received a flu vaccine in the past year.

Self-reported data

Applicable if you require employees to complete a self-attestation form as part of your well-being program.



Satisfaction

Assess how the flu prevention campaign met employee expectations.

Launch a post-campaign feedback survey to find out if employees were satisfied with things like:

- Accessibility of information or services
- Campaign strategies and offerings (programs, policies, environmental modifications, etc.)
- Frequency and methods of communication
- Convenience of options
- On-site flu shot clinic experience, as applicable



Discuss improvements for future campaigns

Once your flu prevention campaign wraps up, invite your well-being committee and volunteers to a debrief meeting. Share employee feedback, note what went well, and what improvements could be made. Reflect on campaign goals, which communication methods worked best, and where challenges were encountered. Document this information for future campaigns.

If you held an on-site flu shot clinic, it may also be helpful to include the following:

- Vendor name and names of on-site staff
- Event dates, times and sign-up method
- Number of attendees and whether or not you met your participation goal
- Include any participant or vendor testimonials, anonymously
- Records of your budget and final costs of the event
- Note any issues that came up during the event and how you solved them
- Include recommendations you or the well-being committee have for future events



Appendix

Employer resources and communications materials

Flu prevention resources

Providence Health Plan

Fight the flu Stay healthy this flu season

- Get a flu shot**
Flu shots prevent, protect others – everyone age six months and older should get the flu vaccine each year.
- Wash your hands and disinfect**
Wash your hands often with soap and warm water, or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer (60% and regularly distributed shared surface).
- Cover your cough**
Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or the inside of your elbow when you cough or sneeze.
- Practice good hygiene**
Cleaning frequently touched surfaces regularly, such as countertops, handrails, and door knobs – can help prevent the spread of some viruses.

Visit ProvidenceHealthPlan.com/FindAProvider to find a flu shot location near you.

FLYER:
“Fight the flu”

Providence Health Plan

Symptoms may overlap

Is it a cold or the flu?

Cold	Flu
Onset: Gradual	Onset: Sudden
Cough: Produces phlegm or mucus	Cough: Usually dry
Sore throat: Common	Sore throat: Uncommon
Runny or stuffy nose: Common	Runny or stuffy nose: Sometimes
Sneezing: Common	Sneezing: Sometimes
Aches and pains: Rare	Aches and pains: Common
Fever: None or mild (less than 100°F)	Fever: Common (100°F and above)
Headache: Rare	Headache: Common, severe
Fatigue: Rare	Fatigue: Common
Duration: 7-10 days, some symptoms may last up to 2 weeks	Duration: 5-7 days, some symptoms may last up to 3 weeks

24/7 nurse advice line
Speak with a registered nurse anytime, any day. Call when you have a health concern and are looking for advice. Have your member ID available and call 803-574-8620 or 800-920-5461 (TTY: TIS).

FLYER:
“Is it a cold or the flu?”

Providence Health Plan

Protect yourself and your loved ones

Get your flu shot today

- It's the best way to prevent the flu**
The CDC recommends that everyone age six months and older get the flu vaccine each year. There is no cure for the flu so it's best to prevent it in the first place.
- Your friends and family will thank you**
Protect others by limiting the spread of the flu. People age 65 and older, those with chronic conditions, pregnant women and children are more likely to experience severe flu symptoms or complications.
- You need ongoing protection**
Your immune response gradually declines and viruses evolve quickly, so last year's vaccine may not protect you from getting sick. An annual vaccine is required to provide ongoing protection.
- It's covered by your health insurance**
Most health plans fully cover the cost of the flu vaccine. Check with your health plan for a list of participating pharmacies or visit your in-network primary care provider.

Visit ProvidenceHealthPlan.com/FindAProvider to find a flu shot location near you.

FLYER:
“Protect yourself and your loved ones”



Fight the flu

Stay healthy this flu season

✔ **Get a flu shot**

Protect yourself, protect others – everyone age six months and older should get the flu vaccine each year.

✔ **Cover your cough**

Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or the inside of your elbow when you cough or sneeze.

✔ **Wash your hands and disinfect**

Wash your hands often with soap and warm water, or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizing rub, and regularly disinfect shared surfaces.

✔ **Practice good hygiene**

Cleaning frequently touched surfaces regularly – such as countertops, handrails, and doorknobs – can help prevent the spread of some viruses.

Visit [ProvidenceHealthPlan.com/FindAProvider](https://www.ProvidenceHealthPlan.com/FindAProvider) to find a flu shot location near you.

Symptoms may overlap

Is it a cold or the flu?



Cold	Flu
Onset: Gradual	Onset: Sudden
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Aches and pains: Mild	Aches and pains: Common
Fever: None or mild (less than 100° F)	Fever: Common (100° F and above)
Headache: Mild	Headache: Common, severe
Fatigue: Mild	Fatigue: Common
Duration: 7-10 days, some symptoms may last up to 2 weeks	Duration: 5-7 days, some symptoms may last up to 2 weeks

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Protect others by limiting the spread of the flu. People age 65 and older, those with chronic conditions, pregnant women and children are more likely to experience severe flu symptoms or complications.

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to find a flu shot location near you.



Health For All

We believe everyone should have access to quality healthcare. Healthcare is a human right. And we're dedicated to the health and care of every member of the community because everyone's well-being matters.

For questions about your well-being program, contact
WorkplaceWellness@providence.org

ProvidenceHealthPlan.com