

HEALTH & SAFETY

PLAN AHEAD TO PROTECT EMPLOYEES FROM THE FLU

Protecting employees from seasonal influenza is important. Immunization provides essential protection and prevents the spread of the flu. It is every employers' responsibility to facilitate access to vaccines. To this end, employers should plan ahead to secure an on-site influenza clinic in the spring



EVERY fall, we brace for the impact of seasonal influenza. It is a serious disease that takes up to 3,500 lives annually and causes an average of 12,200 hospitalizations across Canada each year, according to the federal government.

While the COVID-19 pandemic has shaken the world and all resources available are being utilized to stop its spread, we need to remain diligent with similar efforts to minimize the impact of influenza.

When hit with influenza, we know it as days' worth of fever, fatigue, chills and muscle pain — but its impacts go beyond the person infected. Influenza also affects the business landscape because research shows that, with every influenza case, 14 to 16 working hours are lost. Furthermore, employees find that their work performance is impaired for days after returning to work.^{1,ii}

Preventing influenza is a challenge every year as strains of the virus continually change, heightening the impor-

tance of Canadians getting their annual immunization to minimize the spread of the virus and reduce stress on the health-care system — and this has not changed during the COVID-19 pandemic. Employers play an important role in protecting employees against influenza to maintain a healthy workforce, even if some of us continue to work virtually.

Finding an influenza shot takes effort

Employees who need to co-ordinate their work and personal lives to receive an influenza shot can spend hours seeking a location that accommodates their schedule, and immunizers running out of supply can make it even more of a challenge. This inconvenience results in a loss of productivity for travel to and from the appointment.

Some people even opt out of getting an influenza shot altogether due to busy schedules. This decreased immunization rate significantly increases the risk of infection and the potential spread of influenza within the workplace.

A recent Canadian study by Seqirus found that 73 per cent of employees want to have influenza shots available at their workplace, primarily because of the convenience and time saved.

The same survey also discovered that employers that make seasonal influenza vaccines available in their workplace are seen positively not only by employees but also by customers. Employees want their health to be valued and protected by their employer.

Knowing your options is essential in protecting employees

Influenza shots are available to Canadians through public health,

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Researching the ever-changing threat of influenza takes commitment. That's why we're dedicated to developing technologies and influenza vaccines. We're with you.

La recherche sur la menace changeante de la grippe exige du dévouement. C'est pourquoi nous sommes déterminés à mettre au point des technologies et des vaccins contre la grippe. Nous sommes à vos côtés.

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Employers that make seasonal influenza vaccines available in their workplace are seen positively not only by employees but also by customers.

doctors and pharmacists, but supply availability and access vary from province to province during the influenza season. Therefore, employers should consider hosting on-site influenza immunization clinics to make it easier for employees to be vaccinated.

Businesses have a choice when it comes to the vaccine itself. Employers can purchase vaccines directly from the manufacturer, mitigating any supply delays and allowing them to choose non-egg vaccines made using newer technologies that may provide a closer match to the circulating virus strains each season. Alternatively, you can co-ordinate your clinic with publicly funded influenza shots that are available in some provinces.

Suppose your company is encouraging its workforce to work from home well into 2021? In that case, employers

can positively impact the health-care system by making influenza shots available at their workplace where employees can come in with their families to be immunized in an isolated, safe and uncrowded space.

Support is available for an on-site clinic

A workplace influenza immunization clinic does not have to be a complicated process. There are two keys to success:

1. Effective planning and communication: Consider how you can play a positive role in keeping your employees healthy. This includes communication strategies that encourage healthy behaviours by ensuring employees and their families are protected against influenza and are aware of on-site clinics, if available.

Immunize Canada has a variety of resources available, including a toolkit for employers to encourage employees to attend an on-site influenza clinic. This toolkit is based on proven best practices, behavioural techniques and research evidence to guide employees through influenza immunization, such as breakroom posters and pamphlets, sample appointment reminders and templates for emails and intranet posts.

2. Clinic management: If you don't have a nurse on-site, working with an immunization clinic provider takes out the risk and guesswork. It is an effective way to ensure the safe and comprehensive delivery of service by experienced health-care professionals who take care of all of the details.

Workplace-hosted on-site influenza immunization clinics are a cost-effective way to get the influenza shot that is easy and convenient for employees. An immunization clinic provider can guide you through the process of hosting an on-site clinic, manage the logistics and execution and provide the vaccination, registration and post-vaccination care.

Protecting your employees is an essential responsibility when leading a business, and when it comes to influenza immunization, it is simple to do so. The best time for employers to plan and secure an on-site influenza clinic is in the spring so you can understand the process, decide on whether to use privately purchased or publicly funded vaccines and secure your on-site clinic date. [CHRR](#)

To access promotional and education tools on the importance of influenza immunization, visit Immunize Canada (immunize.ca). For more information about workplace clinics, contact a clinic provider.

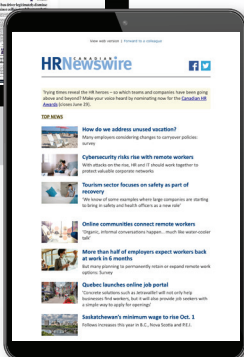
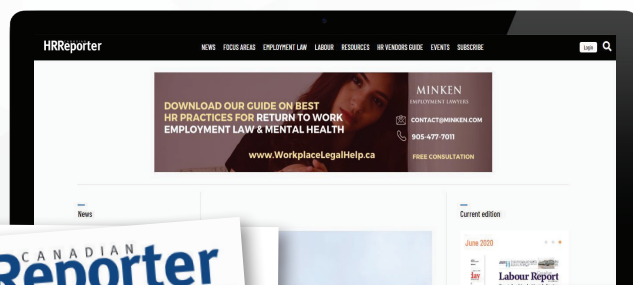
ⁱ Schanzer DL et al. Statistical estimates of absenteeism attributable to seasonal and pandemic influenza from the Canadian Labour Force Survey. Schanzer et al. BMC Infectious Diseases 2011;11:90.

ⁱⁱ Thommes EW et al. Review of seasonal influenza in Canada: Burden of disease and the cost-effectiveness of quadrivalent inactivated influenza vaccines. Human Vaccines Immunotherapeutics 2017;13(4):867-76.

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