

# News



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## Tips for a Healthy Winter Workforce

**Hartford** - The time of year is fast approaching when influenza and common cold viruses will begin to work their way through the Connecticut workforce. The Connecticut Department of Public Health (DPH) is offering tips to help keep Connecticut's workforce healthy this winter.

Each year in the U.S., between 5-20% of the population suffers from influenza-related illness. A much greater percentage of people suffer from symptoms caused by common cold viruses, such as fever, coughing and sneezing, body aches, and fatigue.

While cold and influenza symptoms may have a significant physical impact on individuals, these illnesses also have a significant economic impact on employers. A recent study by the University of Michigan Health System estimated that each year the common cold costs U.S. businesses a total of \$20 billion. The greatest impact is often seen on small businesses, where slim profit margins and a small workforce can be devastated by absenteeism and lost productivity.

"The best thing for workers who are feeling ill to do for themselves and their coworkers is to stay home until they feel better," says DPH Commissioner J. Robert Galvin, M.D., M.P.H. "Workers suffering from illnesses such as influenza or the common cold are not only less productive, but they also have the potential to infect many of their coworkers, causing more absenteeism and lost productivity in the future."

Workers should also be diligent about practicing good hygiene around the office, especially during the winter months. These practices include washing hands frequently with soap and warm water or hand sanitizer, covering your mouth and nose when you cough or sneeze, and avoiding touching your face frequently while at work. In addition, getting vaccinated against influenza is the single most effective step workers can take to reduce their chances of getting ill this winter. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has estimated that U.S. businesses could save up to \$12 billion annually just by providing influenza vaccines for their employees.

These and other tips for keeping Connecticut's workforce healthy this winter are included in a Health Alert posted on the DPH website at <http://www.dph.state.ct.us/BRS/EOHA/wwtips.pdf>. DPH is encouraging employers to print copies of this Health Alert and to post it in visible areas at various locations around their workplace in order to inform their employees about the steps they can take to protect themselves and their coworkers from influenza and common cold viruses this winter.

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