

Go to Work, Catch the Flu?

How workplace flu clinics can help halt the spread of seasonal influenza.

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Are you less likely to catch the flu in the unemployment line than while standing around the office water cooler? A recent study conducted by Emory University economists says “yes.” The study analyzes statistics that link changes in the labor market with fewer cases of seasonal flu in 2009; less people in the workplace reduces your chances of coming in contact with someone who is contagious.*

The study supports a shifting attitude regarding who needs a seasonal flu shot. For years the main thrust of flu vaccination campaigns has focused on the very young and the elderly. A newer strategy suggests that a better tactic may be to focus vaccination efforts on working adults, healthcare workers, and school-age children who consistently come in contact with others and in turn are more likely to infect others. This concept, called “herd protection,” has its roots in the idea that you protect the weakest members of a flock by strengthening the defenses of its strongest members, thereby bolstering the herd’s communal defenses.

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Workplace flu clinics make good business sense

Many healthy adults are under the misconception that they don’t need a flu shot. By focusing educational efforts on dispelling common myths surrounding the flu and its vaccine, as well as promoting the concept of herd protection, healthcare providers may be able to bring about a paradigm shift. Certainly by making it convenient and easy for working adults to get a flu vaccine, flu shot compliance can be substantially increased. A workplace flu clinic may be the ideal way to both educate and immunize the very population group that needs it most: working adults.

Consider the following:

- U.S. companies spend almost \$8 billion in paid

sick leave annually, which equals about 70 million missed workdays, according to global outsourcing firm Challenger, Gray and Christmas.**

- On average, people with the flu miss three to five workdays.
- Due to fear of lost wages, more people today come to work sick, even though their productivity drops by 50 percent and they risk infecting coworkers.

Promoting workplace wellness: Now it’s easy.

VaxAmerica, a vaccine program offered by the NuFACTOR, FFF Enterprises Specialty Pharmacy subsidiary, partners with businesses large and small to facilitate workplace-based flu vaccine clinics. FFF is the nation’s largest distributor of flu vaccine, and VaxAmerica is blazing new trails when it comes to making flu vaccination fast and affordable at convenient places of service such as the workplace.

“Vaccination is always the first line of defense against influenza,” says Nancy Creadon, vice president, VaxAmerica, Inc. “Our goal is to promote wellness in the workplace and stop the spread of illness by providing education, support and access to flu vaccines.”

Launched in 2008, VaxAmerica is corporate America’s preferred solution for the safe and convenient administration of flu vaccines in the workplace. By offering turnkey onsite and offsite clinics, VaxAmerica can help companies avoid illness-related productivity losses and minimize the spread of seasonal flu. For more information about planning a flu clinic for your company, visit www.VaxAmerica.com.

*Are Pink Slips Better Than Flu Shots? The Effects of Unemployment on Influenza Rates, accessed at <http://www.nber.org/papers/w15796.pdf>

**As reported in Disability Law News, “Stay Home From Work?,” January 2006.

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