



Dickinson-Iron District Health Department

"Serving the community since 1936 in Health Protection, Health Education and Disease Prevention"

Guidance for Employees on Returning to Work after Influenza Illness

Overview of Influenza (Flu) Virus Symptoms

Flu viruses are spread from person to person primarily through respiratory droplet transmission (for example when an infected person coughs or sneezes in close proximity, normally 3 feet or less, to an uninfected person). The virus may also be spread through contact with infectious or contagious respiratory secretions on the hands of an infected person or by touching objects or surfaces contaminated with the virus.

The typical incubation period, the time between when a person is first exposed to an infectious disease to when signs and symptoms develop, for seasonal influenza is 1-4 days, with an average of 2 days. Adults can be infectious from the day before symptoms begin through approximately 5-7 days after illness onset. Children can be infectious for more than 10 days after the onset of symptoms. Severely immunocompromised persons can be infectious for weeks or months.

Current Criteria for Employees Returning to Work after Seasonal Influenza

Workers who have become ill with the flu should stay at home until all of the following criteria are met:



- At least 5 days have passed since the symptoms of illness began; AND
- Fever has resolved and has not been present for at least 24 hours; AND
- Cough is improving (decreasing in frequency and amount of secretions with no associated chest discomfort or shortness of breath)

Upon returning to the work environment, employees should continue to follow cough etiquette and hand washing protocols.

Criteria for Pandemic Influenza

Experts do not know whether the mode of transmission, incubation period, or contagious period of a pandemic flu virus will be similar to those of the regular seasonal influenza. Because of this, employers must be alert to specific recommendations from the Dickinson-Iron District Health Department during an influenza pandemic. Management of illness in the workplace, including when it is safe for workers to return to the work, will be communicated through various media as necessary. For the most current information contact the Dickinson-Iron District Health Department at (906) 774-1868 or (906) 265-9913 or visit www.didhd.org.

Source: This document was adapted and reprinted with permission of Public Health – Seattle & King County, WA.