

The flu is a common topic of concern during the winter months. As an organization that interacts with many members, visitors, staff and volunteers on a weekly basis, the flu is important to keep in mind among your administration. It is a good idea to take measures to help prevent the flu within your facility, as well as recognize symptoms and know how to respond to any illness outbreak.

How the Flu Spreads

The flu is contagious and can be spread from someone who is ill before they experience symptoms. To better recognize the flu among individuals in your facility, review the following symptoms as listed by the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#):

- Fever or feeling feverish/chills;
- Cough;
- Sore throat;
- Runny or stuffy nose;
- Muscle or body aches;
- Headaches;
- Fatigue (tiredness); and
- Some people may have vomiting and diarrhea, though this is more common in children than adults.

Those who have contracted the flu will begin showing symptoms one to four days after the virus enters the body. For many individuals, their sickness can infect others one day before symptoms show and remain contagious for five to seven days after becoming ill.

Those who are sick with the flu produce droplets when they cough, sneeze or talk. When these droplets reach the mouth, nose or eyes of a healthy individual, the flu has spread. It also is important to keep in mind the virus can be contracted from up to six feet away. In some cases, individuals may become infected by touching surfaces or objects with the flu virus on it and allowing it to reach their own mouth, nose or eyes.

Preventative Actions

Consider the following measures to prevent the flu from infecting your members, visitors, staff and volunteers:

- **Host a flu vaccination clinic** – Hosting a flu vaccination at your facility can help reduce the number of flu cases, as well as the number of absent employees and volunteers, maintaining productivity and efficiency. Many pharmacies and community vaccinators can be contracted to arrange such an event at your facility. If a flu vaccination clinic is not possible, take steps to encourage your members, employees and staff to get a flu vaccine and provide information on how to do so.

- **Regularly clean and disinfect** – With the number of people who visit your building, it is important to regularly clean and disinfect commonly touched objects, such as door knobs, keyboards and phones.
- **Educate about daily preventative measures** – Inform individuals about flu symptoms, how the virus spreads and what they can do to stay healthy, such as washing their hands, avoiding contact with sick people and covering their nose and mouth when coughing or sneezing.
- **Maintain adequate supply of tissues, soap, paper towels, alcohol-based hand rubs and disposable wipes** – Since your organization will be encouraging individuals to participate in daily preventative measures, make sure you have enough items to support these activities.
- **Encourage those who are sick to stay home** – Most importantly, the best way to prevent the spread of flu among your organization is to encourage those who have already fallen ill to stay home and away from your facility.

While the flu is most common in the winter, be sure to your organization establishes a plan in responding to illness outbreaks at any point during the year.

Illness Outbreaks

In a pandemic or epidemic situation, your organization should first follow public health advice. During such circumstances, you may have to go to extra lengths to protect members, visitors, employees and volunteers, as the number of illness cases will be increasing. One practice to consider is social distancing. According to the U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), social distancing is reducing the frequency, proximity and duration of contact between people. Within your establishment, an example of this practice is limiting meetings among employees or conversing more through email or telephone. In extreme cases, social distancing could mean temporarily closing your organization. Be mindful of current outbreaks and health incidents happening in your area.

For information on current outbreaks or material from previous ones, visit the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Recent Outbreaks and Incidents](#) page.

Sources:

- [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#)
 - [Flu Season](#)
 - [Everyday Preventive Actions That Can Help Fight Germs, Like Flu](#)
- United States Department of Labor
 - [OSHA: Guidance on Preparing Workplaces for an Influenza Pandemic](#)