

# THE EXTRA POINT

BY JERRY ROBERTS



## # 253 Developing a Workplace Illness Plan

Common illnesses like colds and flu take an annual toll on workplaces everywhere, including Guam. I'm Jerry Roberts, and today we tell you how to minimize the impact, on The Extra Point.

Guam's tropical environment is a perfect host to year-round viruses of one kind or another. Every school in Guam is an incubator for numerous and simultaneous bugs, so if you have kids you're particularly susceptible to picking something up. We come down with a runny nose and a sore throat, sneezing and coughing...but we still come to work — and that can be trouble. Here's some reality.

A sick person is likely not going to be highly productive, and they could end up spreading their misery to other workers, and even customers. Not all workers get paid sick days and if not, the first thing on their mind is their hours, not if they might make somebody else ill. Or they might have those paid sick days but feel they need to finish important work or the team will suffer. Whatever the reason, this is where managers have to make the decision for those who won't make it for themselves, taking preventative measures such as these:

1. If the person can work from home send them the files and materials they need. They come back when the illness passes.
2. For those whose presence is critical and time off is not an option, use a mask over the mouth and nose. You can buy the disposable variety in quantity. Use each once and throw it away. Flu is contained in air droplets so make sure the mask guards against air particles.
3. Organizations can implement a flu action plan in case widespread illness strikes. Who covers for who and how do we make sure the operation doesn't skip a beat?
4. Restroom habits vary from person to person.

Post reminders in all restrooms to thoroughly wash hands. Big posters on walls are good. Taping smaller notes on urinals and inside toilet stalls is also recommended. Hands should be washed several times each day.

5. Clean and disinfect work stations including objects used by multiple people, such as staplers, copiers, and telephones. Keep hand sanitizer available. In addition, you can schedule your entire office for an in-depth cleaning.
6. If your company offers health insurance ask your insurer if they have materials you can give to employees, or a program where they visit the workplace and teach about good hygiene and illness prevention. If you're without insurance, call public health or look online to see what you can download, then see that everybody gets the information.
7. Talk about flu shots with your insurer, public health, or low-cost providers.
8. Lifestyle issues matter. Unhealthy food, no exercise, alcohol, drugs, and poor sleep can lower the immune system. With all the information available today, it's strange to realize that most workers don't make the connection between all those factors.
9. Take this issue seriously and you'll minimize the impact and discomfort illnesses can have on your workplace.

That's The Extra Point. Get out there and make something good happen today. For 93.3 and the Ray Gibson Show, I'm Jerry Roberts.

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