

Study finds mandatory flu vaccines for healthcare workers reduce absenteeism

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A multi-institutional study, as reported in the journal sites *Infection Control and Hospital Epidemiology*, shows that mandatory flu vaccines for healthcare workers improve vaccination rates by as much as 30 percent and reduce absenteeism during critical periods by about six percent. Further, vaccinated healthcare workers had a 30 percent reduction in absenteeism compared to non-vaccinated healthcare workers overall. Children's Hospital Colorado (Children's Colorado) was one of the hospitals that mandated the flu vaccine during the trial.

"By lowering absenteeism, mandatory influenza vaccination can help hospitals maintain optimum staffing levels especially during the busy respiratory illness season," said Chris Nyquist, MD, MPH/MSPH, medical director, Infection Prevention and Control at Children's Hospital Colorado. "This benefits not only the individuals getting vaccinated but also the organization and, ultimately, the patients,"

Researchers for this study, titled Respiratory Protection Effectiveness Clinical Trial, carried out the study over three separate flu seasons at three healthcare systems that mandated influenza vaccination for their employees (Denver Health Medical Center and Johns Hopkins Health System in addition to Children's Colorado) and at four Veterans Administration (VA) facilities that encouraged but did not mandate influenza vaccination for employees (VA Eastern Colorado Healthcare System; Michael E. DeBakey VA Medical Center; Washington, DC VA Medical Center; and VA New York Harbor Healthcare System). Healthcare workers at all of the combined institutions were offered free, onsite vaccinations.

Researchers found that:

- Influenza [vaccination rates](#) of healthcare personnel at the non-mandatory sites were consistently lower than those at the mandatory

- Vaccination rates fell at non-mandatory sites during the three years of the study

- Vaccinated [healthcare workers](#) had a 30 percent reduction in absenteeism compared to non-vaccinated healthcare workers

- Absenteeism among healthcare workers was about 6 percent lower at mandatory sites than non-mandatory sites, and the number of days absent also was lower

- Males, older workers, and those at non-mandatory vaccination sites had longer durations of sick leave

"Absenteeism among healthcare personnel can negatively affect a facility's ability to care for patients during busy viral respiratory illness seasons," said Dr. Nyquist. "Given that concern, minimizing [absenteeism](#) among [healthcare personnel](#) should be a priority when developing [influenza vaccination](#) policies."

More information: Protecting Healthcare Personnel in Outpatient Settings: The Influence of Mandatory Versus Nonmandatory Influenza Vaccination Policies on Workplace Absenteeism During Multiple Respiratory Virus Seasons, ([PDF](#))

Provided by Children's Hospital Colorado

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