



# Frequently Asked Questions about the Flu Shot Policy

October 24, 2013

## ***Do I have to get the flu shot?***

The policy upheld by the arbitrator states that if you do not get a flu shot, you can still work, but must wear a mask at all times during the declared flu season.

## ***When does flu season start?***

Flu season is declared by the Provincial Health Officer. It is typically declared between late-November and March.

## ***Do I have to pay for my flu shot?***

No. The cost of the flu shot is covered. Many workplaces regularly hold flu shot clinics for your convenience. You are encouraged to take advantage of the clinics.

## ***I am pregnant. I don't want to get the flu shot. Does this mean I am going to lose my job?***

No. You have an alternative. You can wear a mask at work during flu season.

## ***How am I supposed to eat my lunch in the cafeteria if I have to wear a mask at all times?***

We don't expect employers to be unreasonable about the use of masks on coffee and meal breaks. If you experience any difficulties, consult your steward or the HSA office.

## ***My manager wants me to find out if my colleagues have had the flu shot, and report back to her. Do I have to do this?***

No. You are not required to investigate and report on your colleagues' flu shot practices.

## ***We have a staff list in our department circulating. We are supposed to tick off whether we have had the flu shot. I think this is only fair, so I know which of my colleagues hasn't had the shot and should be wearing a mask.***

This is a violation of people's privacy rights. The employer must not circulate a list publicizing the personal health choices you and your colleagues make.

## ***How do I know for sure someone I'm working with has had a flu shot?***

Individuals are responsible for reporting to their manager if they have had a flu shot.

## ***I work exactly the same shifts as my coworker, and I know he didn't go down to the clinic to get a flu shot, yet he's not wearing a mask. What do I do?***

Your colleague has a right to his privacy. You do not know his individual circumstances. Flu shots are available at many different locations. It is up to your manager to ensure the policy is enforced, but you have no responsibility to report your suspicions to your manager.

## ***Do I have to wear the sticker or other identifier showing I have had the flu shot?***

No. It is no longer part of the policy. While we know that some employers still want to provide decals or some other "gold star" type sticker to employees who attend their in-house flu clinics congratulating them on getting immunized, this is not a requirement and employees are not obligated to accept the identifier if it is offered.

## ***I don't get the flu shot. I had a bad experience with it once, and I am not going to risk that again, but I can't do my job with a mask on.***

If you have a medical reason for not getting the shot, and you can't do your job with a mask on, the employer has a duty to accommodate your needs. If you are concerned that you will be threatened with termination, or are being told to go home without pay, contact your steward or the HSA office, as you have a right to grieve

such a violation of the employer's duty.

***I am not getting a flu shot, but will wear a mask. My manager says a surgical mask is all I need. Is this right?***

There is no regulation regarding the use of surgical masks, however, properly fitted and used N95 masks are recognized for providing protection for patients and for health care workers.

Health Canada has guidelines on the use of surgical masks. In short, Health Canada recommends that there be a convenient and ready supply of a variety of sizes of masks. The guidelines are attached here.

***How often should I change my mask?***

Disposable face masks should be used once and then thrown in the trash. You should also remove and replace masks when they become moist.

While there are no regulations related to the use of surgical masks, HSA recommends you follow the attached comprehensive guidelines published by the San Francisco Department of Public Health.

<http://www.sfcddcp.org/facemask.html>

**PUBLIC HEALTH AGENCY OF CANADA GUIDELINES FOR THE USE OF MASKS**

***Health Canada Guideline:***

"Masks and eye protection should be worn where appropriate to protect the mucous membranes of the eyes, nose and mouth during procedures and client care activities likely to generate splashes or sprays of blood, body fluids, secretions or excretions."

Masks must be:

- Products recommended by provincial and/or regional health authorities

- Large enough to cover nose and mouth with visor where appropriate (and eyes where appropriate)
- Available in several sizes
- Clearly labelled for use: Large Droplet: procedure mask, "surgical"
- Packaged with instructions that match Routine Practices and Transmission Based Protection terminology; colour coding to aid with distinction of use
- Comfortable
- In a supply format easily accommodated on isolation carts
- Latex-free
- Fluid resistant (most inclusive product)
- Easy to use (i.e. loops vs strings)
- User friendly: allows easy access to product with minimal hand contact with packaging and other contents
- Disposable

A variety of products may be necessary to accommodate different clinical environments.

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