

Why sick employees should stay home...

As the winter season firmly sets its icy grip throughout the country, leaving many vulnerable people incapacitated by the common cold with some being stricken by a serious case of influenza, it is vital for employers to allow sickly employees to recover from the comfort of their homes, says HR Company Solutions managing director, Madelein Smit.



© Roman legoshyn – [123RF.com](https://www.123RF.com)

“As a business owner I understand the frustration brought upon the organisation when there is a staff shortage, but employers need to be sympathetic towards employees when they fall ill and afford them the leniency to recuperate from home. One sick employee can contaminate the whole office, rendering the vast majority of employees sick,” Smit says.

She says employees should also take proactive steps when they find themselves sick.

“It is necessary and courteous to check in with your employer, informing them of your ailment before the start of your workday, whether you have a pending deadline or not. This affords your colleagues to be able to strategize handling your workload in your absence.

“Once the symptoms of a cold start making themselves felt, rather see a doctor and be formally booked off work. No organisation can benefit from having a full staff complement if they are not performing at their peak,” Smit says.

Medical checks

However, Smit says, employers would be within their ambit in requesting a medical certificate from employees should they feel some of the organisations’ staff are exploiting the generosity afforded to them.

“As stipulated in the terms of the Labour Relations Act and Basic Conditions of Employment, if an employee is away on sick leave for more than two consecutive days, or takes sick leave on Friday or Monday, the employer may ask for a doctor’s note to validate the employee’s case. But most people genuinely fall ill during this time of the year. A little sympathy will go a long way,” Smit explains.

According to the Department of Health, influenza kills between 7,000-12,000 South Africans every year, whilst the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) estimates, adults have two to three colds each year. Worldwide, the World Health Organisation says these annual epidemics are estimated to result in about three to five million cases of severe illness, and about 290,000 to 650,000 respiratory deaths.

Parental responsibilities

“Organisations should further extend the privilege of allowing their employees to stay at home and tend to their sick children. Not everyone can afford alternative babysitting services to mind their children. Some parents' productivity may be affected with a sickly child at home,” Smit says.

For those fortunate enough to remain healthy, hygiene is an effective method for warding off any viruses associated with respiratory infections. Wash your hands or use hand sanitiser to protect yourself from getting sick.

“Medical practitioners recommend getting adequate sleep, managing stress, maintaining a healthy diet and getting regular exercise as a way of remaining healthy. But despite our best efforts at remaining healthy, we may find ourselves weighed down by the cold or flu, in such times, employers would do well to let their employees rest and come back to work when they are fit enough to tackle their work with vigour,” Smit concludes.

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>