

Employee Services, Inc.

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Monthly Newsletter

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Making Your Workplace Healthier

In the early 1900's, the City of Chicago suffered an epidemic of typhoid fever, which was eventually traced back to an infected waitress named Mary who had spread the disease to all her patrons, who in turn infected their families, friends and co-workers.

In today's workplace, there are many "Typhoid Marys" who unknowingly spread colds and influenza throughout their places of work. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control reminds us that we can minimize the spread of illness at work and at home by adhering to a few simple precautions:

- **Wash your hands:** Cold germs are transmitted via sneezing and coughing onto your hands, then onto telephones, doorknobs and office equipment. In a recent study, the most infected objects in the office were computer keyboards. Wash your hands throughout the day and especially before eating or snacking. Use warm water and any type of soap. Remember that it's the friction from vigorously rubbing your hands combined with the soap that kills germs and bacteria.
- **Don't self-infect:** Keep your hands away from your nose, mouth and eyes and cover any cuts or skin splits on your hands with bandages.
- **Don't unnecessarily infect others:** If you're feeling ill, don't volunteer to assist in preparing food or setting up for holiday parties with friends or co-workers. They'll not only understand but will applaud your desire to keep those around you healthy.
- **Stay home if you're truly sick:** If a high fever, severe muscle aches, headache, sore throat, chills, dry cough and less commonly vomiting come on fast, you've probably got the flu! Pneumococcal pneumonia also strikes fast, causing a productive cough and chest pain that worsens with deep breaths. The common cold, on the other hand, comes on gradually, with a runny nose, possibly a sore throat, low-grade fever and usually a dry cough. You may not be doing anyone a favor by dragging yourself into the workplace when you're just too sick to be productive. Don't be a Typhoid Mary!
- **Practice "preventive maintenance."** You do it with your car, so do it with yourself! Get plenty of rest during the cold and flu season; focus on good nutrition (fruits, vegetables, protein) and get your flu shot!
- **Learn to listen to your body:** Unexplained fatigue, loss of appetite and sudden body aches may be signs of an impending cold or flu. By taking especially good care of yourself during the early onset of these symptoms, you may be successful in minimizing the severity and duration of your illness. Plenty of rest and good nutrition may help fortify your body's natural resistance to illness.

Sources: Lawrence Cone, M.D., Chief of Immunology, Eisenhower Medical Center; John Cameron, Nurse Practitioner for Employee Health, Rancho Mirage, CA; U.S. Centers for Disease Control