



The Employer's Guide to Preparing for Flu Season

How to find a vendor, communicate flu facts and engage employees early – to prevent flu in the months to come.



While flu may be the last thing on your mind this summer, consider this: **between 36,000 and 61,000 Americans died of influenza** last season, according to Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). What's more, **over 37 million people** suffered flu illnesses.



With flu season around the corner, it's time to get your employee vaccination program in place. By starting now:



You'll have time to choose a vendor that not only meets all of your company needs, but also the culture. It takes time to interview vendors to determine the best fit. Vendors are already booking.



You'll be able to weigh in on your technology requirements and not just the event experience. Technology-savvy vendors tend to be in high demand and book early because they offer multiple solutions.



You'll be able to choose prime event dates for your locations. Late September and early October event dates go very quickly.



You'll have time to focus on more pressing projects from September through December, the busiest months for those typically tasked with coordinating a flu program. The vendor you choose should be doing 95 percent of the work to make your program successful. Let the flu experts focus on flu while you focus on everything else!



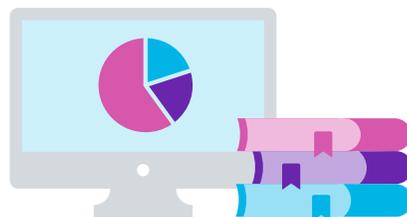
Your employees will get plenty of advanced notice for the event. Having employees schedule early gives them time to plan ahead and set their schedules, which typically leads to higher participation rates.



Ask vendors to answer these questions

As you research vendors for a flu vaccination program, make sure you compare apples to apples. Not all vendors are created equal. Inquire:

- 1 Can the vendor staff all of your locations or do they offer options for off-site workers or smaller locations?
- 2 Does the vendor use nurses or less-skilled providers to administer the vaccination? What experience do they have?
- 3 Are the dates you want available? Can you make changes to the event after you have scheduled it?
- 4 Are there additional costs for services such as privacy screens, travel costs, shipping and administrative costs?
- 5 What are the event minimums for participation?
- 6 Can the vendor facilitate vaccinations provided at convenient retail locations for those who cannot participate onsite? Are these retail locations where employees typically shop or spend time?
- 7 Does the vendor provide reliable, updated and easy-to-use scheduling software?
- 8 Can the vendor's reporting integrate with your existing wellness programs? One of most important considerations by large employers, especially self-funded organizations, is integration with existing health and wellness programs. Integration allows the vendor to provide comprehensive reports and analysis to employers. Predictive analytics that show what costs the company would have incurred without a flu program can help benefit managers justify and support future campaigns.
- 9 What tools and support does the flu shot partner provide? Does the vendor provide attractive and professional promotional materials that can be personalized for individual employers? Find out if the vendor offers additional tools to help you launch, manage and track your flu program such as email templates, auto-reminders, follow-up online scheduling, a user-friendly website, automated verification of eligibility and a user-friendly results dashboard.
- 10 What type of guarantees, if any, does the vendor offer? Look for partners that have meaningful performance guarantees. For instance, what's your recourse if a nurse does not show up or starts late?





Open communication channels

Communication is a key component of a successful flu program. Use the following checklist to keep employees in the loop:



Post information. Educate your employees about flu symptoms. Encourage them to take care of themselves, seek treatment as soon as symptoms begin and stay home to prevent spreading the virus. The CDC provides downloadable guides that cover everything from flu statistics to good health habits.



Give handwashing a high five. Next to getting the flu shot, maintaining clean hands is one of the best ways to stop the spread of germs during flu season. Post signs in restrooms and breakrooms with information about handwashing. Set up sanitizing stations at office entry, exits and other strategic locations.



Manage misinformation. Gather material from reliable sources such as the CDC to inform your employees about flu facts vs. fiction. Print out CDC fact sheets and share with employees or post in high-traffic areas. Make sure you address the three most common flu myths:

- **Shots don't work because they don't cover all flu strains.** Flu shots may not protect against all the strains in a given season. It's true. Still, if a worker gets a flu strain not covered by the vaccine, the illness will be less severe. Plus, vaccinated adults are 52 to 79 percent less likely to die than unvaccinated patients hospitalized with flu, according to *The Journal of Clinical Infectious Diseases*.
- **Flu shots make you sick.** Medical science is clear on this one — the flu shot does not give you the flu. Vaccines are made with an inactivated (and not infectious) virus, making it incapable of giving anyone the flu. Some people may suffer a respiratory illness and call it flu. Others may get the flu before the vaccine's protection takes effect. But don't blame the shot. It will not make you sick.
- **Vaccination events take too long.** Busy employees don't want to wait in line or go out of their way to get a shot. Address this myth by offering shots before, during and after work. Use software to ensure minimal wait times and enable employees to schedule accordingly. Look at providing options for employees at popular retail outlets for their convenience.



Promote employee participation

Let's say you've found the ideal vendor and have your communication tools in place. Your next step is to motivate employees. These tips should help:



Offer incentives. Provide breakfast or lunch after vaccination or offer raffle prizes such as gift cards for participants.



Let employees know if 70 percent of workers gets vaccinated, there would be zero incidence of flu at the workplace, according to the CDC.



Ask the leadership team to lead by example and get vaccinated first.



Post comments from leaders who got vaccinated early in an employee newsletter or your company's intranet.



Distribute information for employees to take home to encourage family members to get vaccinated, too.



Make flu shots a business priority by developing clear and achievable goals for your company and shoot for higher participation rates every year.

Let's Connect

Whether your organization has 50 employees or 50,000, BioIQ can help with your flu vaccination initiative. To learn more about how BioIQ works with employers to keep their workforce healthy all year round, visit our website at [bioiq.com](https://www.bioiq.com) and reach out to us at sales@bioiq.com.