

What to do when...

You are Sick and Work in an Assisted Living or Nursing Facility

Why do I need to worry about my illness on my job?

A lot of different things can make people sick. Some diseases might not affect your ability to work or affect others in your work setting. Because you work in a place where people live close together and many of the residents have health conditions that put them at high risk for serious illness, you need to be extra careful when you have a disease that could be spread to other people.

What types of diseases should I worry about?

Any disease that causes a fever or an illness that includes a cough, sore throat, vomiting, or diarrhea is particularly worrisome. Many diseases that cause these symptoms can be spread from person-to-person. Also, anytime a doctor diagnoses a disease that can be passed from person-to-person, especially if it can be spread by touching things, is a concern. Skin lesions or wounds also pose a risk and may require you to stay home until they resolve.

What should I do if I have a disease or condition like that?

The most important thing to do is to stay home while you are sick. In general, you should stay away from work for at least 24 hours after your symptoms have gone away. Some diseases can be spread for longer periods, even after you are feeling better. For those diseases, you need to stay home for a longer time. Depending on your work responsibilities, you may be allowed to return to work and do different duties until your illness has resolved. If you have a skin lesion/wound above the elbow or below the collarbone, you should be able to continue to work provided the affected area is bandaged and the drainage is contained. Consult with your doctor, local health department, or facility administrator as necessary.

Another important action to take is to be very diligent about hand hygiene. Keep your hands clean to prevent spreading disease to others. Hands must be cleaned with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer before and after contact with each resident. If you are coughing or sneezing, cover your cough or sneeze and clean your hands often.



What do I do if I get sick at work?

Let your supervisor know that you have an illness that could possibly be spread to others. If you prepare food or provide direct care for residents, stop doing those activities right away and keep your distance from others. Leave work as soon as possible.

How can I prevent illness?

Be sure to get vaccinated against diseases according to public health recommendations. Wash your hands often. Remind people who are coughing or sneezing to cover their cough or sneeze and wash their hands. Follow proper infection prevention measures, such as wearing gloves and masks as necessary when caring for residents. Continue to seek out training programs on infection prevention.

