

# Most Americans Still Consider Showing Up to Work When Sick

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It's going to take more than a cold or a flu to get between most Americans and their jobs this cold and flu season, according to a new survey by cough drop maker HALLS. The national telephone survey found that most working Americans won't sacrifice a sick day this year for most cold and flu symptoms, including a cough, sore throat, body aches and sinus headache. In fact, nearly half of Americans (44 percent) would consider going to work with a fever, and about a third of Americans (32 percent) said they would show up to work no matter how sick they get this season.

The results aren't all that surprising based on the country's current economic conditions. With an unemployment rate upwards of nine percent this October, according to the latest U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the survey revealed that one in five Americans (19 percent) feel pressure by their boss or supervisor to head into work when they're sick. One in three (31 percent) Americans said they wouldn't get paid for taking off on a sick day, and one in 10 (11 percent) said they would likely fall behind on their bills by taking a sick day. Additionally, more than 10 percent of Americans thought they would not likely receive their next pay raise or promotion, or worse, would lose their job for calling out sick.

"While HALLS doesn't condone anyone going to work when they're sick, it's clear that many Americans plan to defy the advice of most experts and try to fight through this cold and flu season at work," says Sebastian Genesio, marketing director at HALLS. "Since we know that the economic climate has made an impact on the workplace, we conducted the survey to specifically see how Americans are affected by common cold and flu symptoms when it comes to work, and to identify any concerns they have about taking time off when they're sick."

America's current sentiment toward sick days seems to parallel that of last year. While nearly half of Americans (46 percent) said they did not take a sick day last cold and flu season (October 2009 to March 2010), the same percentage said they're not likely to take a sick day over the next six months during this year's cold and flu season (October 2010 to March 2011). The other half (49 percent) of Americans expect to take between one and five sick days this cold and flu season (October 2010 to March 2011), up a percentage from last year.

When it comes to being prepared this cold and flu season, there are many preventive measures that can be taken in an environment with people who may be sick, including:

- **Get Your Flu Shot** – The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) recommends a yearly seasonal flu vaccine as the first and most important step in protecting against seasonal

influenza. However, the good health habits and practices described below can also be helpful.

- Wash Your Hands Often – Wash your hands frequently with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds – that's roughly the time it takes to sing "Happy Birthday" twice. Remember, when soap and water are not available, an alcohol-based hand sanitizer is a good alternative.

- Cough or Sneeze into Your Elbow – If you don't have a tissue, cough or sneeze into the bend of your elbow to prevent the spread of germs.

- Disinfect Common Surfaces – Germs can live for hours, and in some cases weeks, on common surfaces. Use a disinfectant regularly to wipe and clean doorknobs, phones, remote controls, toys, computer keyboards, and any other items that are shared at home or at the office.

- Practice Good Health Habits – Encourage your family to eat right and exercise. Diets rich in fruits and vegetables provide a loaded source of immune boosting nutrients. Exercising, whether you're walking or playing outdoor games, builds up immune cells in the body and can help you feel more energetic and healthier while increasing your immunity to certain illnesses.

- Drink Plenty of Fluids – Hydrate your body by drinking eight to 10 glasses of water a day to help flush out the system, and to keep your throat moist.

- Rest and Relax – Get as much rest as possible, and try to sleep at least eight to nine hours per night to rejuvenate your body. In addition, try using relaxation techniques that are at your disposal, such as massage, yoga, and meditation.

- Get Fresh Air – A regular dose of fresh air is important, especially in cold weather when central heating dries you out and makes your body more vulnerable to cold and flu viruses. Also, during cold weather more people stay indoors, which means more germs are circulating in crowded, dry rooms.

- Stock Up on the Essentials – Despite taking all these steps, you still may get sick this winter. Be prepared by stocking up on cough drops, tissues, soup, hand sanitizer, vitamins and fever reducer while you're still healthy.

The HALLS cold and flu survey was a telephone survey conducted by Kelton Research on behalf of HALLS. The phone survey took place between Oct. 25 and Nov. 1, 2010 among 621 employed adults age 18 and over, using Random Digit Dialing of listed and unlisted numbers. In this particular study, the chances are 95 in 100 that a survey result does not vary, plus or minus, by more than 3.9 percentage points from the result that would be obtained if interviews had been conducted with all persons in the universe represented by the sample.