# Don’t Drag Your Cold or Flu to Work




## What’s at Stake

Most of us have seen a sick co-worker trying to make his way through the workday instead of being home resting or in bed. But coming to work with a cold, flu or other illness is a bad idea. It can make all of us less productive.

## What’s the Danger

If you do come to work sick, you’ll probably infect your co-workers. A 2010 Virginia Tech study found that a single sneeze from a worker with the flu can infect an entire room with the virus for hours. And while many people recover from the flu within a week or so, others may develop serious complications that can sometimes lead to death.

If you don’t stay home to get well, your workplace almost always ends up less productive and you’re more likely to get injured because you will be more focused on how terrible you feel than on working safely.

**Example**

Ron hasn’t taken a sick day in 20 years, no matter the job, no matter the company. Not even from a good dose of the flu. Sweating, sneezing, coughing and wiping his nose, he never misses a beat.

Ron recently did it again, working through a nasty cold. He coughed, sneezed and sprayed germs all over the office meeting room, doorknobs, printers and everything else he touched.

Less than one week after Ron’s illness, four of his co-workers called in sick, including Bob, whose diabetes put him at risk of developing a serious complication and landed him in the hospital.

## How to Protect Yourself

You may stay home when *you* are sick, but still find yourself working next to co-workers who are sniffling and sneezing their way through their day.

Here’s how you can keep yourself healthy and minimize the risk of catching or spreading a cold, flu or other virus:

- Wash your hands frequently, using plenty of soap and warm water. Wash for at least 15 seconds, paying attention to your fingertips, the area between your

fingers, the bases of your thumbs, the backs of your hands and wrists and your lower arms. Use a paper towel to turn off the tap and open the bathroom door.
- Since you often use your hands when you interact with others, never cough or sneeze into your hands. Bend your arm and cough or sneeze into your elbow. An uncovered cough or sneeze can spread airborne droplets of germs over several feet.
- Keep your hands away from your eyes, nose and mouth. These are superhighways for germs. Most people aren’t even aware they’re touching their own faces, so make a conscious “hands-off” effort and you’ll cut your risk for picking up the flu.
- Help your immune system help you. Make sure you eat properly, get enough rest and exercise regularly to keep your immune system as strong as possible.

## Final Word

Working while you are sick isn’t doing anyone, least of all your co-workers any good. Stay at home if you catch a cold, flu or virus. It’s in everyone’s best interest.