

NEWS OF HEALTH

# Survey: most Americans go to work, even when sick

*Calling in sick with a respiratory ailment difficult for workers*

**Special to Sentinel-Voice (NAPS)** — According to a recent survey released by the Wellness Councils of America, more than four out of five working Americans have gone to the office despite being infected with a respiratory ailment. Of those, 40 percent did so because they felt guilty about calling in sick.

Ironically, 67 percent of those surveyed feel that coughing and sneezing co-workers should stay home, rather than bringing their germs into the workplace.

Respiratory ailments can be transmitted in three ways:

- Through airborne transmission of cough and sneeze droplets, which can remain suspended in the air for long periods and travel substantial distances.
- Through direct contact with an infected person, such as handshaking. In these cases, the infection is spread when the recipient touches contaminated fingers to the mucous membranes of the nose or to the eyes.
- Through touching items someone ill has touched, such as doorknobs or office

equipment.

"It is important for workers to know that viruses and bacteria can live on surfaces such as door handles or keypads for up to hours or days," said Dr. Thomas C. Quinn of The John Hopkins School of Medicine. "You can help protect yourself from catching or spreading respiratory illnesses at work by observing precautions such as washing your hands before and after touching shared items such as a copier or by using a disinfectant on these items."

Common respiratory ailments such as a cold, flu or respiratory infection are most contagious during the first day or two of the infection, when symptoms such as coughing and sneezing are at their worst. Calling in sick with a respiratory ailment is difficult for many of the workers surveyed, with half feeling pressured to come to work even when they are sick.

Ann Marie Sabbeth, author of *Business Etiquette in Brief*, suggests the following tips for discussing this issue with one's boss: "First, you can offer to work from home in situations



*If you have to take a medication and still go to work, have the doctor prescribe one that you can take once daily.*

where this is feasible. Second, you need to stress that by bringing a respiratory infection into the workplace, you are putting other workers at risk."

Some illnesses may require a prescription medication, but many survey respondents report forgetting to take scheduled doses while at work.

"Observing the prescribed dosing schedule for medications is essential," Quinn said.

"Your doctor can prescribe medications with a more convenient course of therapy, such as a once-daily antibiotic, which can be prescribed for certain bacterial respiratory infections," Quinn said. "This allows medication to be taken at home rather than at work."

The Workplace Winter Wellness Survey was sponsored by the Wellness Councils of America, through an educational grant from Pfizer Inc.

HEALTH HINTS

## Sleep, aspirin, juice help combat viruses

**Special to Sentinel-Voice**

The cold and flu season can hit businesses and families hard, as people lay in bed with some of these symptoms: chills, fever, sneezing, headache, sore throat, hacking cough and chest pains.

According to health experts, there is no specific treatment for the viral infection of the flu, but there are several steps you can take to help yourself get better should you come down with it:

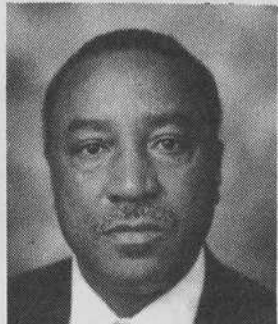
- Go to bed as soon as you begin to experience symptoms, and stay there until your temperature returns to normal.
- Take aspirin or an aspirin substitute approved by your doctor.
- Drink as much water or fruit juice as you comfortably can.

You can also attend to some of the other symptoms — cough and sore throat — with a new formula that has the medicine you want without the additives.



*An alcohol-free cough suppressant can make the flu a little more bearable.*

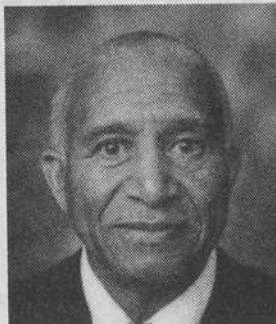
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