



## What HEU members need to know about the annual flu shot in British Columbia

With flu season upon us, it's important for HEU members to familiarize themselves on workplace guidelines around flu shots and influenza outbreaks in order to protect themselves, their patients, residents and clients.

Most of HEU's collective agreements contain language around policies on medical examinations, vaccinations and inoculations – including influenza immunization (flu shots). Please refer to your contract, or check with a shop steward, if you are unclear.

In 2012, B.C.'s Ministry of Health introduced the *Health Care Worker Influenza Control Program Policy*. A group of health care unions, led by HEU and HSA, filed a grievance around the implementation of it. As a result, the policy was revised in July 2013.

Throughout the province, health authorities and affiliated employers have workplace flu shot policies that state: a) who pays for a flu shot, b) on what grounds a worker can refuse to be immunized, and c) what may happen when a flu outbreak is declared.

The employer pays for all health care workers, even those who do not provide direct care, to be immunized for influenza. There's an exception for workers who have a medical reason – confirmed by their doctor – for not receiving the vaccination. Workers should check their employer policy as some allow the option of taking an anti-viral medication, such as Tamiflu, if an outbreak is declared and they have not yet had a flu shot.

If employees are required to wear masks, then the employer must provide an adequate supply of properly fitted and safe masks.

If workers refuse to be immunized without justification – such as a medical reason supported in writing by a physician – they may be subject to progressive discipline.

And in the event a Medical Health Officer declares an influenza outbreak, an employer may send a worker home *without pay* unless the worker's doctor confirms there's a medical reason for refusing to be vaccinated.

British Columbia has clear language regarding vaccinations in many of our health care collective agreements (*see facilities Article 6.02, or community health Article 22.5 as examples*).

October 30, 2017