

Tool Box Talk

PRESENTEEISM

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What is Presenteeism?

According to the *Journal of Organizational Behaviour*, presenteeism is the opposite of absenteeism. Presenteeism is associated with showing up to work when you shouldn't. Most common forms of Presenteeism include:

- Working while sick
- Working while overtired
- Working for an excessive amount of time
- Working through a distracting stressor (i.e. sick child, death of a friend or family member)
- Working while under the influence of substances that can slow reaction time or impair judgement (i.e. certain over the counter drugs, prescription painkillers, alcohol, etc.)

There are numerous causes for Presenteeism which can fit into two major categories: **personal** and **work based**. Personal Presenteeism comes from things such as the belief that "work should always come first." Work-related Presenteeism comes from things such as low job security or work cultures that reprimand employees for missed time.

Consequences of Presenteeism

Working while sick can lead to numerous drawbacks for you and everyone else in the workplace. Continuing to work through illness can lead to exhaustion or more serious health problems in the future. In the case of a cold or flu, Presenteeism can lead to the infection of other co-workers leading to a workplace epidemic.

Presenteeism also tends to lead to overall productivity loss. Working while sick, overtired, etc. may allow you accomplish tasks in the short run but often leads to less productivity at work over a longer period of time.

Certain types of presenteesim can also increase risk for workplace injury. Working while under the influence, overtired, or with an illness that effects mental function can dangerous. Any of these ailments can inhibit judgement and decrease reaction time. Operating machinery and/or power tools becomes exceptionally dangerous when you can't concentrate.

How to deal with Presenteeism

The best way to deal with presenteesim is to take time off of work to recover, but there is much more to consider. It is important to remember that sick days are not holidays, they are in place to help you get better. Take sick days/time off only when you need to. You never know when an emergency can occur.

When taking a sick day/time off, do your best to try and deal with the issue at hand. Rest and relaxation is important, but it may be necessary to visit the doctor if symptoms are serious enough. Try to limit the use of drugs, such as cough suppressors, as they treat symptoms, but not the infection itself, and can even increase recovery time in some cases.

Try to take good personal care whenever possible. Exercise and eating healthy can help prevent certain illnesses and helps recovery time. Getting the proper amount of sleep will help keep you sharp mentally and will improve your mood.

A healthy work environment is important for overall mental health. Strong communication and a supportive team can help reduce presenteesim to a minimum.

Access to sick days may help to reduce injuries. A study by the *American National institute for Occupational Safety and Health* found that workers with access to paid sick leave were **28% less likely** to suffer a workplace injury.

Did you know?

Workplaces with high levels of absenteeism do not necessarily have lower levels of presenteeism. In cases where workers described their workplace as "stressful" were far more likely to have higher rates of both presenteeism and absenteeism. Analyze your workplace and find out why you or your employees are working when you shouldn't be!



HEAD OFFICE | 498 HENDERSON DRIVE | REGINA SK S4N 6E3 | T:306.525.0175 | F: 306.525.1542 | 1.800.817.2079
SASKATOON | 2606 KOYL AVENUE | SASKATOON SK S7L 5X9 | T: 306.652.0907 | F: 306.652.0903 | 1.800.817.2079



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