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## **Flu Opporthreat For Your Club**

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*An OpporThreat is an event which is either an Opportunity or a Threat, depending on how your business prepares for and responds to it. OpporThreats shift the responsibility for the event to you, making you an active participant rather than a victim. If you look at external events as OpporThreats, you can prioritize them by their likelihood of occurring and the power of their impact, and therefore make better decisions for your business.*

While H1N1 may not be the global threat of some previous strains, it's an OpporThreat for you as a health club owner, particularly for your younger members. You should plan to be prepared so that this threat does not disproportionately affect your business. People born before 1957 seem to have a partial immunity to the H1N1 flu because a similar strain circulated in their youth.

### **Consider the Autumn Flu OpporThreat**

You've probably heard of the Spanish Flu, a pandemic that killed more people than all the fighting combined in World War I. Oddly enough, that flu epidemic spared older people and killed the youngest and healthiest. This happened in part because flu viruses redesign themselves for survivability and virulence and so occasionally, a strain of flu occurs which is both more serious and more unpredictable than previous strains. In part because of this terrible tragedy, the medical and scientific communities addressed prevention, diagnostics and treatment in an aggressive manner, breakthroughs which are well-known today.

In particular, consider your staff who were born after 1957 and take steps to keep them and your company healthy. Visit [www.flu.gov](http://www.flu.gov) for more guidelines and information. Updated federal guidelines offer businesses and employers a range of options for responding to 2009 H1N1 influenza and suggests that business planners assess their business functions to determine the threshold of absenteeism that would be potentially disruptive as well as plan ahead to take increasing measures as absenteeism escalates toward those thresholds. Two specific documents available include:

- Guidance for Businesses and Employers to Plan and Respond to the 2009 – 2010 Influenza Season  
<http://www.flu.gov/plan/workplaceplanning/guidance.html>
- Preparing for the Flu: A Communication Toolkit for Businesses and Employers  
<http://www.flu.gov/plan/workplaceplanning/toolkit.html>

**Here are some general guidelines to follow for prevention:**

1. Train your staff to wash their hands regularly and provide hand sanitizers in all areas of the club.
2. Make sure your staff receive seasonal flu shots, and H1N1 Swine Flu shots in particular if they are approved.
3. If someone has the flu, send them home and keep them there until they have been fever-free for at least a day.

**For the Club:**

1. Have hand sanitizer dispensers by each door as well as throughout the club, as well as provide disposable sanitizing towels near each piece of equipment. While there seems to be some question whether hand sanitizers have any impact on viruses, they are effective against most bacteria. Also consider providing free samples of hand sanitizers to your members with your business name on them.
2. Encourage and train all your members to use hand sanitizers for their hands as well as to wipe down any equipment they have touched with their hands..
3. Instruct your cleaning staff to concentrate on doorknobs, railings, keyboards and equipment, and to sanitize those many times each day.
4. Post flyers in the restrooms and offices about flu prevention, and keep a stack at the front desk for members to take home with them.
5. Shaking hands? Well, if both of you have washed and sanitized recently, this is probably just fine. It might be wiser to rub ears.