



If the record-breaking 2017-18 flu season taught corporate America anything, it's that a fever doesn't discriminate against paygrade. And with allergy season gearing up, and summer colds just on the horizon, it's a good time to remember the importance of sick leave policies.

"Sick days should be looked at like [health insurance](#)," said MIT Sloan professor of management Lotte Bailyn. "We don't resent it when we're well and only sick people get the benefits of the insurance. That's the same with sick days: you're putting a bet on being well, but have help if you're not, and there should be no resentment either way."

Bailyn said [managers](#) should lead by example and stay home when they're under the weather. They should learn to trust subordinates to serve in their absence—a chain of command a manager should already be working to establish.

Sick day policies should be open and not require too many permissions, Bailyn said. If there's worry about cheating the system, it's the assumption that's the problem, not the policy.

"If the expectation is that workers enjoy their work and their [work environment](#) (which is the responsibility of the manager to create) then they won't cheat, and if they need a day without being sick the atmosphere should be good enough that they can just do that and make up the work in other ways," Bailyn said. "Managers should assume that people will be out, they do get sick, and they should help work groups organize their work in such a way that ... the work gets done even when one or more people are absent."

Here's a flowchart to keep on hand (don't forget to wash them!) for those days when you're not sure whether to stay in bed or head to the office.

The simple answer: If you're sick, stay home.

Provided by MIT Sloan School of Management

Citation: Flowchart promotes a healthy sick leave policy (2018, March 26) retrieved 14 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2018-03-flowchart-healthy-sick-policy.html>

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