

SAFETY MEMO

September 20th, 2021 – Presenteeism



Did you know?

Presenteeism

Presenteeism is the behavior of coming to work despite needing a medical leave due to physical or psychological problems¹. This phenomenon is the opposite of absenteeism.

A study carried out in Europe concluded that 39% of the employees studied made at least one day of presenteeism per year². Other studies associate presenteeism with a loss of productivity in the order of 30% compared to normal work.³

Presenteeism can be caused by physical and psychological health problems:

- Musculoskeletal disorder
- Respiratory problem
- Heart disease
- Migraine headache
- Viral or bacterial infection
- Depression
- Professional and emotional exhaustion
- Anxiety
- Chronic disease (arthritis and others)
- Eating disorders
- Tiredness and lack of proper sleep

Presenteeism can be done on a voluntary basis. The employee might develop a sense of commitment to their job and a sense of professionalism that might conflict with taking medical leaves. In addition, presenteeism can also be done unintentionally out of fear of reprisal. An



employee might also refuse to take a medical leave to not overload a colleague with her/his tasks.

Prevention

In some cases, employees may need to speak to their supervisor about reducing workloads, sharing workloads with other employees who may be less busy, or delegating projects to employees who have a better understanding of the project needs.



By living a healthy and balanced lifestyle, you may be able to avoid the health problems that cause presenteeism. Having a healthy diet, being active and being fulfilled in your social sphere are essential. It is important to be able to disconnect from your phone or voicemail after your workday, to completely take the evenings and weekends off.

Additionally, most companies allow workers to take sick days for medical reason and for mental health. These days should be taken if you must be away for physical or psychological problems. Your colleagues and supervisor will be understanding of your need to rest and recover.

Finally, many companies offer employees access to external resources such as Employee Assistance Programs. These programs offer immediate access to professional doctors, psychologists, and other therapists. These programs are strictly confidential, and if needed, the employee may be directed to speak to their family doctor or another professional if the EAP program is unable to provide the specific type of assistance unique to employee's needs.

¹ Carrefour, L'ABC du présentisme : la coté obscur de la présence au travail. <https://carrefourh.org/ressources/sante-securite/2011/07/l-abc-du-presentisme-le-cote-obscur-de-la-presence-au-travail>

² Mouna Knani (2018) *Présentisme en contexte des petites et moyennes entreprises : étude des déterminants individuels et psychosociaux*, p.3

³ Carrefour. <https://ordrecrha.org/ressources/sante-securite/2011/07/l-abc-du-presentisme-le-cote-obscur-de-la-presence-au-travail>