



Maintaining Personal Health & Wellbeing: Preventing Seasonal Infections.



Thursday 22nd June 2023
10am – 1pm GMT



Speaking at a previous European Safety Week Kieran Sludds Health and Safety Manager of the Health and Safety Authority (HSA) explaining why the HSA is focusing on health and wellbeing, Mr Sludds said Central Statistical Office (CSO) figures show higher rates of illness and absences compared to accidents at work. Similar experience was experienced in the United Kingdom. **The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) statistics record that half of all work-related ill health cases during 2019-20 were caused by stress, depression and anxiety.** The UK Safety Health & Safety Executive recommends that how work is organised needs to be looked at again.

Assessing the risks of the work environment on health and wellbeing is included with the ISO 45003 standard. Co-convenor in developing the standard, Stavroula Leka says: 'With mounting data that poor work organisation, design and management is associated with poor mental health, absenteeism, presenteeism and human error, it was felt that a specific guidance standard on psychosocial risks was needed.'

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Another initiative from The Institution of Occupational Safety and Health (IOSH) calls for a structured approach and prevention and one area that can improve illness and absences is in the area of preventing seasonal and airborne infections. Winter death rates generally exceed those in summer months because infectious diseases, like influenza, tend to circulate more in winter. Four of the most common types of respiratory infections are COVID-19, the flu pneumococcal disease, and colds.

Taking responsibility for all aspects personal health, including mental health is within our control. Professor Anne Kenny of St James Hospital in her book 'Age Proof' quotes a number of studies indicating that high stress hormones trigger physiological responses. According to Maurice Quinlan Director of the EAP Institute "Prolonged stress weakens the immune system and causes many seasonal infections which are preventable. Left unchecked it may lead to more serious illness including heart disease, cancer and premature death.