

>> TOOLBOX TALK – 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)

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.

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 case of a cold or flu, presenteeism can also lead to the infection of other co-workers.

Presenteeism 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.

Presenteeism can also increase the risk of workplace injury.

Working while overtired, distracted or with an illness that effects concentration can be dangerous. Any of these situations can impair judgement and decrease reaction time. Operating machinery and/or power tools becomes exceptionally dangerous when you can't concentrate. Additionally certain medications (prescription or over the counter), taken to address symptoms of illness may have side effects which can impair your mental acuity.

The best way to deal with presenteeism is to take time off of work to recover. Sick days are not holidays; they are in place to help you get better. Take sick days/time off only when you need to, as you never know when an emergency may 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 may treat symptoms, but not the infection itself, and may even hinder recovery time.

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

The work environment

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

Complete and attach Toolbox Meeting Form and process as per company policy.

Content adapted for NLCSA, with permission, from toolbox talk by the Saskatchewan Construction Safety Association.



TOOLBOX MEETING FORM

Date: _____ Project: _____

Supervisor: _____ No. in Crew: _____ No. Attending: _____

Review Last Meeting:

	Names of Attendees (Signature Required)
Topics Discussed (policies, practices, procedures, hazard assessment):	
Suggestions Offered:	
Action(s) to be Taken:	
Injuries/Accidents Reviewed:	

Supervisor's Remarks: _____

Signature: _____