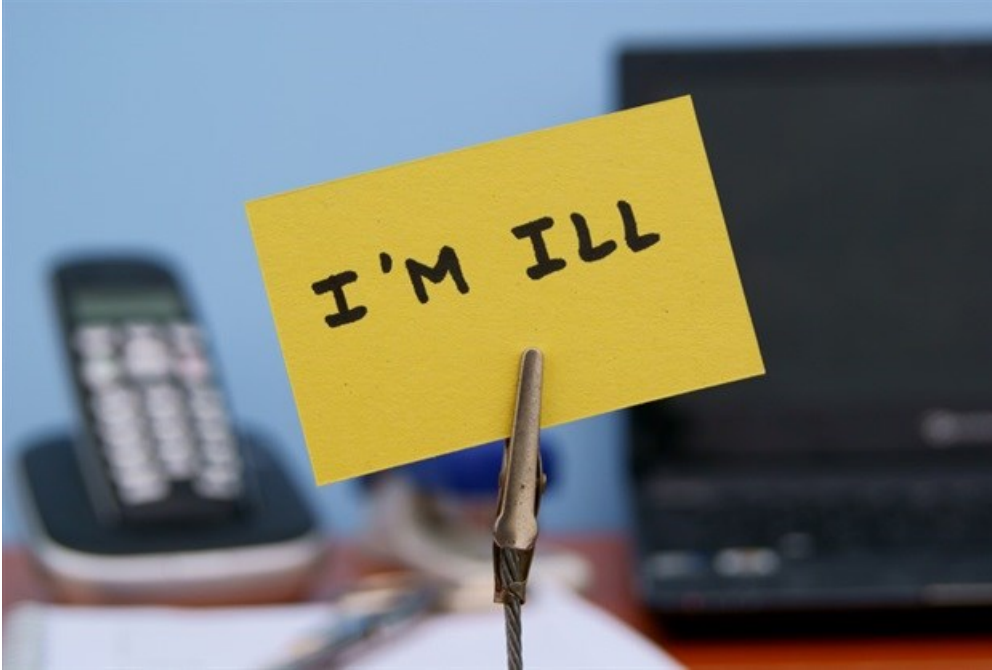


Are your employees possibly abusing their sick leave?

Owing to the fact that sick leave is fully paid and the employer is obliged to pay out the employee's full monthly salary on the usual pay day, sick leave abuse remains rife in many workplace environments.



© Bart Photo - [Fotolia.com](https://www.fotolia.com)

Kay Vittee, CEO of Quest Staffing Solutions, says that while every employee falls ill or requires recuperation time following a medical procedure or injury, many organisations still report concerns of employees taking advantage of using their sick leave to take time off work - despite the fact that they are still mentally and physically able to conduct their duties and responsibilities.

“The reality is that each individual’s ability to function when ill differs from person to person. It’s often the case that people nearing burnout or those undergoing a lot of stress, whether it be in the workplace or at home, are more likely to contract and have a more adverse reaction to office bugs making their rounds.

“However that being said, many employees incorrectly make use of sick leave to have an off day when they should in actual fact be applying for an annual leave day. Unless recommended by a medical professional, general fatigue is not generally considered a reason to take sick leave,” she comments.

How much sick leave is allowed?

In accordance with the Basic Conditions of Employment Act (BCEA), every worker is entitled to one day of fully paid sick leave for every 26 days worked. This means that during a three-year period, a worker is entitled to the sick leave equal to the number of days they would normally work in a six-week period. This amounts to 36 days for workers working six days a week, and 30 days for workers working five days a week.

For Vittee, taking unnecessary sick days not only lowers productivity but puts additional strain on your work colleagues who will have to pick up the slack of you not being in the office.

“Whether you like it or not, taking large amounts of sick leave also comes with reputational implications. Even if you are genuinely sick, taking lots of sick leave may impact your career growth or even performance bonus. People who take lots of time off work or are regarded as not pulling their weight, rarely get promoted or recommended for a salary increase,” she adds.

For Vittee, part of the problem when it comes to sick leave abuse is that many employees are not aware of what sort of physical ailments constitute valid reasons for taking sick leave.

“No one wants to get sick but unfortunately no one is immune to illness. Your best bet is to first identify your symptoms and then make an educated decision as to whether you are well enough to go to work, or whether you should stay at home or seek medical advice. It’s important to know when it’s time to call in sick and what the best option is for both for you as well as your colleagues,” she says.

And while employees need to ensure they act responsibly and with integrity when taking sick leave, Vittee says organisations need to ensure they have a realistic leave policy in place and that it is regularly communicated to staff.

“It is essential for organisations to ensure they implement a watertight leave policy and that all employees are aware of its requirements and implications. Ultimately it comes down to keeping the lines of communication open whereby through openly and honestly addressing health issues, employers and employees can ensure they maximise productivity while still maintaining a healthy workforce,” she concludes.

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>