



# News from Walgreens

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## **The Impact of a Severe Flu Season: Americans Missed 230 Million Work Days and Lost \$8.5 Billion in Wages in 2012-13, Walgreens Flu Impact Report Suggests**

*Survey finds 11 million vacations impacted and 91 million school days missed during last flu season, triple the number during typical season*

DEERFIELD, Ill., Oct. 16, 2013 – The 2012-13 flu season was one of the most severe in the U.S. in more than a decade and according to a new study, had two to three times the impact over a more typical flu season on the workplace, school, family and other segments of people's everyday lives. A new report from Walgreens (NYSE:WAG) (Nasdaq:WAG) suggests **U.S. adults missed 230 million work days** last season, while **children lost more than 90 million school days** due to flu-related illness. By contrast, 100 million work days and 32 million school days were missed in 2010-11, according to the [Walgreens Flu Impact Report](#).

Released today, the report examines the broad implications of the flu on people's everyday lives and the U.S. economy. The latest findings illustrate the wide-ranging impact of last flu season, as well as stark comparisons to the 2011 Flu Impact Report, which was conducted following a more typical season, and also the most recent commissioned by Walgreens.

Flu activity last season peaked in December 2012, coinciding with the winter holidays and resulting in **more than 11 million vacations interrupted or canceled** as a result of the flu, a 300 percent increase over 2011, based on survey results.

"The flu season is always unpredictable, and the impact it can have on individuals and families at home and in the workplace can be significant," said Harry Leider, M.D., Walgreens chief medical officer. "Last year, with flu peaking early, a lot of people weren't prepared and as a result lost vacations and missed out on holidays. This underscores the importance of getting a flu shot early, and our report shows more people are planning to do so, along with taking other preventive measures this year."

### **Flu Impact on the Workplace**



Nationally, the report suggests the flu-related **cost to employers in 2012-13 was \$30.4 billion, three times the \$10.5 billion** impact found in 2010-11, while employees who missed time at work due to flu-related illness **lost more than \$8.5 billion in wages**. In addition:

- Employees missed, on average, three days of work in 2012-13, compared to an average of one day during the 2010-11 season
- 6.2 million Americans missed a business trip in 2012-13 compared to 2 million in 2010-11
- Three out of four respondents indicated they were personally impacted by the flu last year

### **Not-So-Festive Holidays for Some**

With the peak of last season's flu activity coinciding with the winter holidays and busy travel season in December, millions of vacations and other holiday festivities were likely spent in bed, instead. More than two out of five (42 percent) respondents that had the flu last year missed some sort of activity as a result. These include:

- **Holiday events missed: 17 million** vs. 4.7 million in 2011
- **Vacations missed: 11 million** vs. 3.6 million in 2011
- **Romantic dates or other occasion missed: 13.8 million** vs. 5.1 million in 2011

### **“Germ-o-phobia”**

The term “germ-o-phobic” has become more mainstream in recent years, with the use of sanitizers on the rise and greater awareness around how germs and viruses can spread. Nearly **two-thirds of those surveyed (60 percent) say they will take extra precautions to avoid the flu this year**, including washing hands more frequently (87 percent), getting a flu shot earlier (51 percent), getting flu shots for family members (49 percent), limiting time in public places (43 percent) and trying working from home more often (11 percent).

### **Lessons Learned from Last Season**

Although the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that people get a flu shot as soon as vaccine becomes available, typically in August:

- **Nearly one-third (31 percent) of the 2012-13 survey respondents waited until November or later to get their vaccine**
- Walgreens data shows 20 percent of the 7 million flu shots administered at Walgreens (including Healthcare Clinics and Duane Reade) last season were administered in January
- Nearly four out of every five (79%) Americans believe that it takes 10 days or less, after receiving the flu shot, for the body to build up full immunity; in reality it takes up to 14 days

The full *Walgreens Flu Impact Report* can be found here:

<http://www.multivu.com/players/English/62923-walgreens-flu-season2013/>

### **Methodology**

The Flu Impact Survey was conducted online within the United States by USamp on behalf of Walgreens from Aug. 27 to Sept. 4, 2013, among 1,200 nationally representative adults ages 18 and older. Flu Impact Report results were balanced on key demographics to allow projection of results to the entire U.S. adult population. Results are based on self-reported instances of the flu and flu-like symptoms. Projections incorporate the latest data available for average compensation and hours worked from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, population data and projections from the United States Census and compared against beta Flu Work Loss models developed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The margin of error for the national sample is +/-2.9 percent reported at a 95 percent confidence level.

### **About Walgreens**

As the nation's largest drugstore chain with fiscal 2013 sales of \$72 billion, Walgreens ([www.walgreens.com](http://www.walgreens.com)) vision is to be the first choice in health and daily living for everyone in America, and beyond. Each day, Walgreens provides more than 6 million customers the most convenient, multichannel access to consumer goods and services and trusted, cost-effective pharmacy, health and wellness services and advice in communities across America. Walgreens scope of pharmacy services includes retail, specialty, infusion, medical facility and mail service, along with respiratory services. These services improve health outcomes and lower costs for payers including employers, managed care organizations, health systems, pharmacy benefit managers and the public sector. The company operates 8,123 drugstores in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Take Care Health Systems is a Walgreens subsidiary that is the largest and most comprehensive manager of worksite health and wellness centers, provider practices, and in-store convenient care clinics, with more than 750 locations throughout the country.

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