A recent study by medical students at the University of Texas-Austin affirmed that paid sick days can reduce public health risks, allow workers to heal more quickly and care for their loved ones when they are sick, and reduce health care costs. Below are some of the key findings, along with stories from Austin workers shared in an in-depth focus group.

**Paid sick days can reduce transmission of the flu and other ailments:**
More than a third of flu cases are transmitted in schools and workplaces.

- During the 2009 swine flu pandemic, about 5 million additional people got infected as a result of a co-worker who did not stay at home when they were infected with the flu. This resulted in more than 20,000 unnecessary hospitalizations and over 1,300 unexpected deaths.¹

- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends people “stay home from work, school, and errands when you are sick.”²

- During the flu season, absences of K-12 students in Central Texas peaked to an average of 350 a day.³ Ninety percent of the 2.4 million student absences per year are due to a health condition; 62% involve low income students. Yet only one-third of workers in the lowest income have paid sick days.⁴

“I’m a single mom of 2 kids, ages 8 and 9. I got sick, then the kids did. My boss said, ‘If you keep missing work, you’re not going to have a job.’ So I had expenses that week of the doctor, medications and 3 days that I didn’t go to work – and the threats about being fired.”

Construction worker

**Paid sick days will make restaurants safer:**
The data shows that foodborne illnesses can be limited if industry workers had better paid sick leave benefits.⁵

“‘I was working at a restaurant from 5-10 am. I [got sick.] You have to go to work every day. If it was contagious, I would have gotten co-workers sick – it could have been an epidemic.”

Restaurant worker

**Paid sick days will reduce the likelihood of outbreaks of stomach flu in nursing homes**
A study found that the respiratory and gastrointestinal disease outbreak risk is significantly lower in nursing homes with paid sick day policies.⁶
Workers with paid sick time can get treatment and heal with fewer complications.

Workers with paid-sick leave are less likely to seek care in emergency rooms and less likely to develop complications from untreated illness.\(^8\)

**Paid sick time helps prevent work injuries.**

Studies have found that paid sick leave helps lower unintentional work-related injuries significantly. Workers with paid sick leave are 21% to 35% less likely to endure a non-fatal injury at work.\(^9\)

*I deliver documents. I really can’t afford to get sick. If you decide you don’t want to work, that’s cool – just don’t come back. A month ago, my shoulder was quite sore. It would have been nice to recuperate, but nah, just take some aspirin and get back to it.*

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"I worked there two years and every day I was so close to committing suicide or being hospitalized, every day. Not having paid sick days contributed to that."

Retail worker

**Those with access to paid sick days are more likely to receive preventive care**

They are also more likely to have preventive health interventions\(^10\), such as colon and breast cancer screenings, and lower levels of psychological distress.\(^11\)

*For more information, contact Working Texans for Paid Sick Time, [http://working-texans.org/](http://working-texans.org/)*

**Paid sick days can lead to a decrease in mortality.**

Paid sick leave is associated with a significant decrease of 22% in overall mortality at 4.5 years. Mortality rates are higher among workers without paid sick leave because they delay emergent medical care as they face a tough choice between calling in sick and going with no pay, which not only jeopardizes their livelihood but also their job security\(^13\).

**Paid sick days reduce health care costs costs**

Outbreaks of contagious diseases, such as influenza, can overwhelm an already fragile healthcare system and substantially reduce the nation’s gross annual product. Offering paid sick leave to all workers could reduce emergency care cost to the tune of 1 billion dollars per year.\(^12\)

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**ENDNOTES:**

10. DeRigne, L.; Stoddard-Dare, P.; Quinn, L. Workers without paid sick leave less likely to take time off for illness or injury compared to those with paid sick leave. Health Aff. 2016, 35, 520–527.