

# How do I ask my boss to stop announcing my doctor's appointments?

**Question:** "How can I tactfully and respectfully ask my boss to stop announcing my doctor's appointments to other employees? I cover for other areas, and when I have an appointment my boss will send an e-mail to the employees impacted (and their bosses) saying, 'Since Jane needs to go to the doctor on Friday, here is our revised coverage schedule.' Or, 'Since Jane is going to see the dentist on Tuesday.' I really don't wish to have other employees know that I'm seeking medical attention." — *Anonymous, Los Angeles*

## Comments

Ask your boss to not announce your personal information to other employees. Or, don't tell him/her why you are taking time off. If you are allowed to take personal hours, or vacation time, I don't think you are required to reveal "why" you want to take the time off. If he/she asks why, just say that it's personal and you don't prefer to share that information. They really shouldn't be inquiring anyway!!

**Posted by: Cindy | February 08, 2008 at 02:23 PM**

Unless your boss has to give you permission to take time off to go to the doctor or dentist, I would simply not tell him/her the purpose of the appointment. Just say that you have an appointment. and that you need to be out of the office.

Otherwise, I would simply ask your boss to stop. "I know you need to let the other staff know when I will be out of the office, but I would be more comfortable if you didn't specify the reason, which is personal information they don't need to have." His messages should read "Since Jane will be out of the office on Friday, here is our revised schedule."

**Posted by: cjmoore | February 08, 2008 at 02:27 PM**

Next time you let your boss know that you have an appointment you could request that your boss not include the nature of your absences in any email he/she sends out. Or offer to send out the notice yourself. If that does not work, your HR department should be available to let your boss know that that type of information should be considered confidential.

**Posted by: Robin | February 08, 2008 at 02:29 PM**

Is your boss doing this for everyone they supervise? If so, I would start by not telling your boss about what you

actually do on your own personal time which is totally different compared to if you were going to be out sick for a few days or more which may need to be relayed to the other staff.

Good Luck.

**Posted by: Virginia | February 08, 2008 at 02:35 PM**

Your boss is probably doing it because it's easier to solicit help in these instances. First ask, and if that doesn't work, remind your boss that personal information is shared with your boss as a courtesy of your relationship; and the only thing others need to know is that you will be out. There may be some privacy issues being violated by making a general announcement of your medical needs to others. You can check with HR and share that information with your boss for educational purposes.

**Posted by: J.Charlton | February 08, 2008 at 02:36 PM**

At our company, when a member of the administrative staff is going to take time off, we (the individual) send out an email letting the people we support know that we will be out. In our email message we give out as much, or as little, information as we feel is necessary regarding the reason for the absence and give them the option to contact any other member of the administrative staff for assistance during our absence, including their phone extensions. I agree with J. Charlton's posting, that you should check with HR since "There may be some privacy issues being violated by making a general announcement of your medical needs to others".

**Posted by: Eunice | February 08, 2008 at 03:11 PM**

I agree with Eunice and anyone addressing the privacy issue. The term we use at our office is either "PTO" or simply "Out of Office" That's all anyone needs to know.

**Posted by: | February 08, 2008 at 03:37 PM**

I let my main boss know when I will be out of the office and advise him that I will be sending out an "Out of Office" email to my other bosses (and as a courtesy to the staff). This way, he doesn't have to bother and it says what I think is appropriate and gives the staff an opportunity to bring me their urgent tasks.

**Posted by: Anita T. | February 08, 2008 at 04:27 PM**

Has anyone heard of HIPPA?

**Posted by: Sherry | February 08, 2008 at 05:21 PM**

Your boss may be breaking the law by telling others that you are going to doctor or dentist. Giving that information to others may present privacy issues. What I would do is just ask for time off for personal business (after all, what's more personal than going to doctor or dentist?). You should be sending Out of Office message to the others in the office. In the future, just tell all your coworkers that you are taking time off for personal business.

**Posted by: Anon | February 08, 2008 at 05:49 PM**

Sorry, I meant 'HIPAA.'

But Anon is correct; your boss is possibly breaking the law by announcing your reasons for requesting time off to other employees.

**Posted by: Sherry | February 08, 2008 at 06:10 PM**

"I'm kind of embarrassed by my personal details being put out there, so if it's okay with you, just say that I am taking a little personal leave. Thanks for understanding my privacy." If that doesn't work, try talking to his supervisor about HIPAA and about FMLA rules.

**Posted by: Pat | February 08, 2008 at 06:59 PM**

You should ask him to stop making that type of announcement and if that does not stop then seek out your HR manager for legal advice. HIPAA covers this as a Federal Privacy Act of "Privacy and your Health Information" is what you can take with you to your HR Manager when you go. I am a Manager and I would never make this type of announcement for any reason. Good Luck.

**Posted by: Randy | February 09, 2008 at 01:09 AM**

I totally agree with Eunice, you should just tell your boss that you will be sending out the email to the dept/staff and only put what you deem important enough for them to know, which is "You will be out of the office". I'm sure they appreciate to only know that you will be out so they know they need to go elsewhere if an issue arises.

**Posted by: Carmen | February 11, 2008 at 01:48 PM**

I agree with Pat that you talk with him. Another way to put it is "Just as you wouldn't want me telling employees you are having doctor or dentist appointments, I would prefer the same courtesy and discretion."

Linda

**Posted by: Lshar | February 11, 2008 at 03:14 PM**

Did anyone ever see the movie "Working Girl"? I really did enjoy that movie as it depicted what a professional office and staff should look like, in spite of the ugly things that went on there between the boss and her secretary. Sigourney Weaver told Melanie Griffin that she was never in a meeting, but always on another line, something to that effect. It would irritate me so when someone would come to the office asking for my boss, and my co-workers would say she was out to lunch or at a meeting, whatever. My request to them was to say that she was not available and I would justify to them that it was no one's business what anyone in our office was doing, and that the same response should apply to anyone coming from the outside. Now maybe in an office and between co-workers, you could say a person is out, has an appointment, but the nature of personal

business is not for all to know. This boss should show a bit more professionalism. Lead by example. So you need to take the lead and let your boss know that you would appreciate it if what you do on your personal business is not made known to everyone, and to stop making such announcements, and that from now on you will not be giving him detailed reasons for your requested time off. The same would apply if you called in sick, you don't have to tell them what you are sick from, just that you are ill, not feeling well, a generic reason.

**Posted by: Dina | February 12, 2008 at 05:53 PM**

Perhaps your boss is of "the old school" and knows/understands how difficult it is to GET and then KEEP doctor and dentists appointments, will all the other daily commitments that we have. He/she may innocently be trying to convey that the reason you're not available IS an important reason - one that anyone in any position can understand. Please have a conversation with him/her rather than assume this person wants to blab your personal business and/or break laws. I work with a few of these managers and have spent quite a bit of time easing them into this century where communicating is concerned. Many times they simply are not aware that what they are doing/saying is inappropriate (or borderline illegal) in today's environment. My feedback is always appreciated - and is often now sought out for internal communications. We have 6 departments in our office, with approx. 8 individuals in each.

**Posted by: Jesse | February 29, 2008 at 03:06 PM**