

MEDIA RELEASE

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“IMMUNISATION PART OF BEING SCHOOL READY” SAY GPs

Tasmania’s GPs are urging parents and carers of children to ensure that their children are fully immunised as they get ready to start school this year.

There are different vaccinations for different ages of children and unfortunately immunisations are sometimes forgotten during this busy time. When children commence school they often mix with a much larger group of people, putting them at greater risk of coming into contact with infectious diseases.

Immunisation provides protection against diseases such as whooping cough, chickenpox, meningitis C, hepatitis B, polio, diphtheria, tetanus, measles, mumps and rubella. Vaccines for these diseases are provided free to children in certain age-groups under the National Immunisation Program.

“Although there is a perception that vaccine preventable diseases are no longer present in Australia anymore, the fact is that diseases such as whooping cough and measles do still occur and can cause severe illness and sometimes death. Vaccination is the best way to stop them spreading in our community. Over the past few years there has been an increase in the number of cases of whooping cough in Tasmania as well as the rest of Australia. There have also been cases of measles in some mainland states”, General Practice Tasmania Immunisation spokesperson Dr Leanne Jones said.

“For our four-year-olds starting school for the first time there are a number of vaccinations required to ensure that they are covered against infectious diseases. Parents can ask about booking their child in for a Healthy Kids Check at the same time as the four-year-olds immunisation. In this way, parents can be confident that their children are ready to start the school year in the best and healthiest way possible.

Parents would be providing the best possible start for their children by protecting them from infectious diseases and having them checked out by their doctor or nurse before they go to school for the first time.

For children of other ages vaccines are usually provided through council and school programs but some children miss doses if they are away or unwell on the day the vaccine is given at their school. These children are eligible for a ‘catch up’ vaccine from their GP.

It is also important to remember that if a child is not immunised and there is an outbreak of a vaccine preventable disease at their school then the child may be excluded from school. The exclusion period can be up to two weeks, which can place a burden on parents who may have to take time off work to care for them.

“Having the required immunisations is a great start for young children as they commence school for the first time, ensuring that their time at school is enjoyable, fun and importantly, that their formative learning years are kept as disease-free as possible,” Dr Jones said.

End Media Release

The General Practice Tasmania network is a unique statewide infrastructure that supports contemporary general practice in Tasmania by linking GPs with each other, by supporting all members of the general practice team and, increasingly, by employing or supporting allied health professionals such as physiotherapists, dieticians and psychologists to be part of the primary care team. General Practice Tasmania is also a proud member of the Australian General Practice Network.

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