

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 for this year.

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

"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.

General Practice Tasmania Immunisation spokesperson, Dr Leanne Jones, said the start of schooling for children was also an opportune time for parents to book them for a Healthy Kids Check which has been introduced for four-year-olds.

The Healthy Kids Check was established in 2008 by the Australian Government to promote the early detection of lifestyle risk factors in children as well as to identify any potential developmental issues or illnesses and to provide information for parents on healthy lifestyles.

"Parents can ask about booking their child in for a Healthy Kids Check at the same time as the four-year-old's 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. 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," Dr Jones said.

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 able to eligible for a 'catch up' vaccine from their GP.

"Although there is a perception that we don't have diseases such as whooping cough or measles in Australia anymore, the fact is that these diseases do still occur and vaccination is the best way to stop them spreading in our community."

Over the past 18 months there has been an increase in the number of cases of whooping cough in Tasmania. Children who are not immunised may be excluded from school if an outbreak occurs.

"Having the required immunisations as well as the Healthy Kids Check is a great start for young children as they start 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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