Influenza season has started in Queensland

One third of all flu cases and hospital admissions this year have been reported in the last two weeks (as of 11 August 2014).

The number of flu cases can be expected to continue to rise over the coming weeks.

Young children

Young children, especially those aged five years or younger, are at higher risk of severe disease and hospitalisation if they are infected with the flu virus.

As schools and childcare settings are prone to experiencing rapid transmission of flu, now is the time to review infection control practices and promote key flu prevention and control messages.

Resources to assist with promoting awareness of flu prevention and control are available at www.health.qld.gov.au/flu

Key actions to help prevent and control flu outbreaks

- It is not too late to vaccinate

Remind and encourage seasonal influenza vaccination for any person aged six months or older.

- Staff, children and parents should always practice and promote good hand and respiratory hygiene.

The importance of frequent hand washing with soap and water followed by thorough hand drying using a single-use towel should be reinforced and promoted. Alcohol based hand gel/wipes can also be used. However, these products are not as effective when hands are visibly dirty or greasy.

Ensure coughs and sneezes are covered, preferably with a disposable tissue. Having tissues and rubbish bins readily available can help.

- Keep centre environments clean

Some organisms can remain viable for 24 - 48 hours after landing on hard and soft surfaces. Increased environmental cleaning will help interrupt disease transmission.

Strict attention should be paid to cleaning—tables, chairs, doorknobs, taps, toys and sleeping areas.

Bedding should washed regularly and not be shared. Personal bedding should be bagged and sent home with any sick child.

- Staff, visitors and children should stay home if sick.

Staff and children with flu-like symptoms—fever, dry cough, muscle and joint pain, tiredness, extreme exhaustion, headache, sore throat and stuffy nose—should stay at home.

Staff and children who present unwell with fever and other flu-like symptoms while at childcare should be sent home. Seek early medical advice if concerned.

If you have any questions please contact your local public health unit www.health.qld.gov.au/cdcg/contacts.asp

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