Help keep your kids safe at childcare, preschool and kindergarten

As the school year starts, knowing your child is up-to-date with immunisation can provide parents with real peace of mind.

Vaccination provides protection against some of the diseases young children can catch.

Sunshine Coast Hospital and Health Service (SCHHS) Public Health Physician Dr Rosie Muller said the start of childcare, preschool or kindergarten is a good time for parents to review their children’s vaccinations, to make sure they are up-to-date or know when they are due for their next vaccination.

"The immunisation schedule can be hard to keep up with. There is a big gap in the schedule from 18 months to four years so vaccination may not be thought of for a while," Dr Muller said.

“The routine childhood vaccinations for children at four years of age aim to protect against serious diseases such as diphtheria, tetanus, whooping cough and polio.

“Immunisation is extremely important and effective at preventing severe outcomes from life threatening infectious diseases.

“Our childhood immunisation rates are gradually improving, but below the 95% for good community immunity. Good community immunity prevents outbreaks of disease. Sometimes, an outbreak can occur in a childcare, preschool or kindergarten as you have many children together in the one place," Dr Muller said.

“Community immunity also helps protect people who can’t be vaccinated, for example babies who are too young.”

In the year to September 2019, 91 per cent of one-year-old children, 89 per cent of two-year-old children, and 93 per cent of five-year-old children living in the Sunshine Coast Hospital and Health Service area had received all of their recommended vaccinations. This means about 1200 local children across these age groups were without the protection from serious diseases such as measles and whooping cough that immunisations provide.

“One of the most important local barriers to childhood vaccination is parental hesitance. Parents who are hesitant about vaccinating their child often have questions or concerns but may not know where to get reliable information. GPs and Australian government websites, such as Queensland Health are excellent sources of reliable information,” Dr Muller said.
SCHHS leads a range of important initiatives to support vaccination for children. These include the Jabba Jabba Indigenous childhood vaccination outreach service and specialised support and education for general practices that provide vaccination.

For reliable information about childhood vaccination, see https://www.qld.gov.au/health/conditions/immunisation

Parents can also use the Queensland Health smartphone app ‘VacciDate’ to help keep track of their child’s vaccinations. This app is available via the online link above.

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