

UNDER EMBARGO UNTIL
Friday, 24 April 2020

Medical Mums urge free kids' flu vaccination

World Immunisation Week (24 to 30 April 2020)

While most parents understand immunisation is the best way to protect children against many serious and life-threatening diseases, they often overlook the risks posed by influenza.

According to Queensland Health, infants and children less than 5 years of age are more likely than older children and adults to get severe flu infections resulting in hospitalisation.

Brisbane North PHN Deputy CEO Libby Dunstan said myths circulating on the internet can confuse well-meaning parents about whether or not to vaccinate their children.

"To coincide with World Immunisation Week (24 to 30 April 2020), we have refreshed our Medical Mums public awareness campaign to counter vaccine myths," Ms Dunstan said.

"Immunisation rates for childhood vaccines covered under the National Immunisation Program Schedule are really quite high in Brisbane North, but seasonal flu vaccine coverage always seems to languish a lot lower," she said.

"Unfortunately, during this year's flu season, we also have to contend with coronavirus.

"Doctors are warning that the consequences of contracting both COVID-19 and the flu at the same time would be catastrophic.

"Given the flu vaccine is free in Queensland for children aged between six months to under five years of age, we'd like to see more kids vaccinated against influenza," she said.

The Medical Mums website – www.medicalmums.com.au – and annual campaign tackle some of the main myths known to be causing vaccine hesitancy among parents.

"We know parents are getting mixed messages about vaccination, but our campaign message is clear and unambiguous," Ms Dunstan said.

"If parents have safety concerns about vaccines, they should talk to their GP," she said.

"Whether it's from something they've read online or a rumour they've heard from a friend, parents are saying it's hard to know what's true, but they don't have to figure this out for themselves.

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“The best person they can discuss their concerns with is their GP, who can answer their questions in more detail,” Ms Dunstan said.

Medical Mums campaign advertising features a series of animation videos that will appear across various digital platforms, including Facebook.

General practices are encouraged to access the patient resources available for download from the [Medical Mums website](#).

ENDS

Fast Facts

Recorded coverage of seasonal influenza vaccine among Qld children aged 6 months to <5 years (2018):

- Indigenous – 29.4 per cent
- Non – Indigenous – 25.1 per cent

Source: National Centre for Immunisation Research and Surveillance, *Annual Immunisation Coverage Report 2018*, published Nov 2019, http://ncirs.org.au/sites/default/files/2019-11/NCIRS%20Annual%20Immunisation%20Coverage%20Report%202018_0.pdf

Brisbane North PHN childhood immunisation coverage (National Immunisation Program Schedule – Dec 2019):

- All children aged 12 to <15 Months – 95.28 per cent
- Indigenous children aged 12 to <15 Months – 92.2 per cent
- All children aged 24 to <27 Months – 92.81 per cent
- Indigenous children aged 24 to <27 Months – 90.84 per cent
- All children aged 60 to <63 Months – 94.69 per cent
- Indigenous children aged 60 to <63 Months – 98.44 per cent

Source: Australian Government Department of Health, 2019 PHN Childhood immunisation coverage data, updated 16 February 2020, <https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/2019-phn-childhood-immunisation-coverage-data>

Editor's note:

A press quality image of Libby Dunstan is available from Dropbox here:

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/y9yco7olkfekv9i/AABdl3MqBpkRrmSwwHC6J3MBa?dl=0>

About Brisbane North PHN

Brisbane North PHN is one of 31 Primary Health Networks nationwide and supports clinicians and communities within North Brisbane, Moreton Bay and parts of the Somerset region. The PHN covers approximately 4,100 km² of urban, regional and rural areas, with a population of over one million.

The key objectives of the PHN are:

- increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of medical services for patients, particularly those at risk of poor health outcomes, and
- improving coordination of care to ensure patients receive the right care in the right place at the right time.