

Influenza

Information for Principals and Boards of Trustees

Influenza (flu) season is nearly upon us, so it's time to get prepared as flu can spread quickly in schools and colleges.

We recommend the following actions to help prevent students, staff and families from getting sick.

Influenza.
Don't get it.
Don't give it.

1. Make it easy for you and your staff to get immunised.

The influenza vaccine is available now at your GP or pharmacist. This vaccine protects against 4 flu strains including the 'Aussie flu strain' that has been severe in the USA. It is very important for staff, in particular pregnant women, or children and adults who have an underlying health condition (that may make them more susceptible to becoming very sick) to be immunised. Immunisation is free for people¹ with certain health conditions.

- Offer immunisation to your staff through a workplace vaccinator, local GP or pharmacist.
- Allow staff to get immunised by their GP or pharmacist during work hours.

2. Prevent the spread of illness in your school/college by:

- Remind parents and staff that sick students or staff should not be at school, sports matches, school productions or camps. This is so they can rest and recover and don't spread illness to others.
- Ask parents to let you know if their child is away sick with flu like symptoms.
- Make sure everyone covers their mouth and nose with tissues when coughing and sneezing. Put used tissues in a covered bin or plastic bag. If there are no tissues available, cough or sneeze into your upper sleeve - not your hands. Remember to wash or use hand sanitiser on your hands afterwards.
- Encourage students and staff to wash their hands regularly. Alcohol-based hand gel can also be used to supplement hand washing.
- Regularly clean surfaces that are touched a lot e.g. door handles, counter tops, bathroom areas, as viruses can live up to 48 hours on hard surfaces.
- Put up posters about handwashing and preventing influenza around the school. Posters accessible at www.rph.org.nz/influenza-education

3. Share the following information by email or notice board to keep staff, students and their families and whanau healthy:

- Influenza vaccination is recommended for children and teens to stop them getting sick and reduce flu spreading in the community. Further information is accessible at www.fightflu.co.nz/information-parents
- 2018 'Flu can be anywhere' brochure and RPH 'Influenza' brochure accessible at www.rph.org.nz/influenza

4. Notify Regional Public Health on 04 570 9002 of possible outbreaks.

An outbreak is defined as: Three or more cases (staff or child) exhibiting symptoms of illness in 48 hours or 15% of the school/college is unwell.

¹ Details about the free flu vaccination for people at most risk can be found at www.fightflu.co.nz