

## Influenza and Flu Hygiene

State schools across a number of education districts have reported higher than normal levels of absenteeism due to illness for this time of year.

The safety and well-being of staff and students is Education Queensland's highest priority at all times and schools are reminded to be vigilant in implementing infection control practices that minimise the potential for disease transmission.

Departmental procedure [HLS-PR-004 Infection Control and the Management of Prescribed Contagious Conditions](#) and the [Infection Control Guidelines](#) provide information to assist schools develop an infection control program.

Queensland Health's Chief Health Officer, Dr Jeannette Young, said flu numbers would most likely recede towards the end of August but until then the community needs to take all necessary precautions to stay well and prevent the spread of germs.

Many schools have achieved excellent results in minimising the spread of illness by providing information to their school community via newsletter items and fact sheets on infection control and influenza. Generally schools are advising that staff, students and volunteers who are showing flu-like symptoms seek medical advice and stay home. Queensland Health has produced a fact sheet – [Influenza](#) - which may be useful when providing information to your school community.

The federal Department of Health and Aging have provided the following advice on influenza management.

### *"Flu Hygiene*

*The flu virus can travel through the air when a person coughs or sneezes. It can then survive on surfaces for several hours remaining a source of infection for others. There are, however, simple things everyone can do to stop the flu spreading.*

*Measures to prevent the spread of the flu virus include:*

- *covering your mouth and nose when you sneeze or cough;*
- *washing your hands regularly and properly;*
- *cleaning household, school and workplace surface areas;*
- *not sharing personal items such as eating and drinking utensils and food; and avoiding close contact with other people and staying home when sick.*

*Annual vaccination, good personal hygiene and protecting others through staying at home when ill are important prevention measures for influenza."*

The federal government has also produced some very useful resources that may be of assistance for your school:

["The Flu and You" brochure](#) – provides information on the five simple ways to prevent the spread of influenza.

["The Flu and You" Posters](#) – three posters that can be downloaded and used as visual reminders throughout your school.

Queensland Health advise that staff and students with cold and flu symptoms should stay away from school whilst they are unwell. Anyone who has flu-like symptoms and is concerned about their health should consult their local general practitioner in the first instance. Queensland Health can provide general information via their information line: 13 HEALTH (13 43 25 84).

More information is also available from the Queensland Health website at [www.health.qld.gov.au](http://www.health.qld.gov.au).