



The Immune Response

April 2003

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CSL

Vaccines

Please copy and distribute to all immunisation providers in your practice or health centre. Thank you.

Keep up to date with the latest SARS news

Check the Health and Ageing website (www.health.gov.au) or the WHO site (www.wpr.who.int/) for current releases. Or phone the Federal Health Department's information line on 1800 004 599. Between March 28 - April 26 when the line was first established, it received 22,670 calls.

Follow the basic guidelines set out by the DoH. Patients meet the case definition for a suspected case of SARS by having a history of:

- high fever ($> 38^{\circ} C$);
- AND one or more respiratory symptoms including cough, shortness of breath, difficulty breathing;
- AND one or more of the following: close contact, within 10 days of onset of symptoms, with a person who has been diagnosed with SARS; history of travel, within 10 days of onset of symptoms, to an area in which there are reported foci of transmission of SARS.

If a patient indicates upon making an appointment that they suspect that they are a SARS case, attempt to arrange a home visit.

If a person suspects that they are a SARS

case and is to be seen at your clinic, arrange for the patient to be provided with a mask on arrival and wherever possible to be taken immediately into a separate consulting room.

If a patient presents to your practice without notice but with respiratory symptoms, ask if they have travelled to one of the affected regions listed above. If so, seat them separately and provide them with a mask as a precaution. Provide reassurance regarding the precautions taken. Wear a mask and gloves during the clinical assessment of suspected SARS cases until the diagnosis can be excluded. The consulting room door should be closed, air conditioning switched off and the window opened if possible. Practice standard infection control procedures with the focus on hand washing and disinfection or disposal of objects potentially contaminated by respiratory secretions.

If the patient is going directly to hospital notify them ahead so they can be prepared for the case.

Notify the Northern Rivers Public Health Unit immediately on 6620 7500.



Spike to visit Ballina!

Meet Spike Echidna in Ballina Fair shopping centre on Saturday 10 May between 10.00am and 12.00pm.

Following his successful first outing at Lismore Shopping Square a few weeks ago, we are looking forward to introducing him to the children of Ballina and promoting the "Vax'em!" website to their parents.

Anyone in the area is welcome to come along to meet Spike. Don't forget to keep plugging the website: www.vaccination.org.au. It answers common immunisation questions, and provides news, articles and links to other sites.

If you need any more fliers, posters or Spot the Difference drawings, please contact the NR division on 6622 4453.

Supplies of free influenza vaccine slow

Due to unprecedented demand, supplies of free influenza vaccine are slower than usual. The vaccine can be ordered as often as weekly, but only 50 at a time can be ordered. Please keep this in mind when making appointments.

All people over the age of 65, or 50 years for indigenous people, should receive the influenza vaccination from their GP, nursing home or Aboriginal Medical Service. The vaccine is also recommended for people of all ages with chronic health problems such as diabetes, asthma and heart disease.

The vaccine is only provided free for those aged 65 years and over and for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders aged 50 years and over.

It costs around \$21-25 for those who are not eligible to receive the vaccine free of charge, and \$3.70 for healthcare card holders.

The division recently held its second annual flu vax day to promote flu vax to the public. Not only were 14 people protected against the flu this winter, but the photoshoot received coverage in local press and television. Public health nurse Marianne Trent gave the vaccines.



SPIKE SAYS

"Vax'em!"

www.vaccination.org.au

Do you want to receive *The Immune Response* by email? Please send your email address to gmcdonald@nrdgp.org.au