

Media Release

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Clean hands and vaccination best to dodge the flu

Catching the flu is as easy as shaking hands with an infected person or touching a door knob.

Infection Prevention nurse Vicki Barrow said while vaccination was still the best protection from the flu, good hand hygiene played a big role.

Today is World Hand Hygiene Day and people are encouraged to do their bit to stay well.

“A lot of people don’t realise you can catch diseases such as flu by shaking hands or touching a contaminated surface and then touching your nose and mouth,” Mrs Barrow said.

“An effective way to help reduce the spread of flu is to wash hands frequently with soap and water, followed by thorough hand drying using a single-use towel.

“You can also use alcohol based hand gel/wipes, but be aware that these are not as effective when hands are visibly dirty or greasy.”

In the Mackay HHS there have been 40 laboratory confirmed cases of the flu from January 1 to April 26. Statewide there have 1855 notifications.

Mrs Barrow said good hand hygiene was the foundation of infection prevention in the community and in the hospital.

“Colds and flu spread easily through the air and if we can prevent the dispersal of these droplets, then the risk of infection transmission is reduced.”

Tips to stay well are:

- Sneeze, blow your nose or cough into a disposable tissue and throw the tissue in the bin
- If there are no tissues cough/sneeze into your upper arm or sleeve - avoid using your hands
- Turn away from people when coughing/sneezing and move away from people who are coughing/sneezing
- Wash your hands after coughing/sneezing/blowing your nose. If there is no soap and water use an alcohol-based rub may be used
- Try to keep your hands away from your eyes, nose and mouth.

Hand hygiene is taken so seriously in hospitals that national data is kept on hand hygiene ‘moments’ such as before and after touching a patient.

In the audit period ending October 2014 there were 6563 hand hygiene ‘moments’ observed by trained auditors with a compliance rate of 87.8%, well above the national bench mark of 70%.

ENDS

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