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## Vaccination the best protection for school starters

Of all the ways to prepare your child for their first weeks of school, immunising them against serious illness is probably the most important. As a new school year begins, parents are reminded to make sure their children are fully immunised before beginning primary school.

South Western Sydney Local Health District (SWSLHD) Acting Director Public Health Dr Madhumati Chatterji said it was important all primary school-aged children were up to date with vaccinations.

“All children should have their booster needles between three and a half and four years of age,” Dr Chatterji said.

“When enrolling a child in school, parents are asked to provide evidence of their child’s immunisation history.

“They can do this by obtaining an Immunisation History Statement, issued by the Australian Immunisation Register (AIR).

“The statement will be sent to a child’s home address once AIR has been notified by the GP or immunisation provider that the child has been vaccinated with the appropriate vaccines for four year olds,” she said.

Schools are not able to accept other records such as the blue book or overseas vaccination records. Parents should see their GP or immunisation provider if records of their vaccinations need to be sent to AIR so they can obtain an Immunisation History Statement.

Dr Chatterji said immunisation programs in NSW had been very effective in reducing the risk of vaccine-preventable diseases.

“Important vaccine-preventable illnesses like whooping cough, measles and meningococcal C infections continue to occur in the community.

“Vaccination is the best way to protect a child from these serious diseases. If most children are vaccinated this also protects those who are too young to be vaccinated, or those who can’t be vaccinated because of medical conditions,” she said.

Parents can request an Immunisation History Statement by calling the AIR on **1800 653 809**, emailing [acir@medicareaustralia.gov.au](mailto:acir@medicareaustralia.gov.au) or visiting Medicare Online Services at [www.medicareaustralia.gov.au/online](http://www.medicareaustralia.gov.au/online) or a local Medicare office.

For more information please contact the **Public Health Unit** on 1300 066 055 or visit <http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/immunisation/Pages/default.aspx>