



Public Health Alert

Date: 13 March 2013

To: GPs, Practice Nurses at Primary Care Centres, After-hours Centres, the Emergency Department and Hospital Staff in the greater Wellington and Wairarapa regions

From: Dr Jill McKenzie, Medical Officer of Health

Re: Recent increase in Cryptosporidiosis cases in the Wellington region and Promotion of Influenza Vaccination

1. Increase in Cryptosporidiosis cases in the Wellington region

Reinforcing Hygiene Messages and Swimming Pool Exclusion in suspected cryptosporidiosis infections.

Cryptosporidiosis notifications in the greater Wellington region have been around 2x higher than expected in the past six weeks.

Since the beginning of February 2013, 22 cases have been notified to RPH. Usually we would expect around 10-12 cases in this time period. Cases are spread throughout the region, but with predominance in Wellington City. About half the cases are in the 0-15 year old age group, and a significant number of 25-44 year olds are also affected.

About half the number cases have reported using a public swimming pool at some point during their illness. Pools are predominantly in the Wellington city area but also include pools in the Hutt Valley, Porirua and Kapiti Coast areas. Some cases have reported contact with more than one swimming pool.

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Some of our cases were visiting Hawkes Bay during their incubation period. Hawkes Bay is currently experiencing high numbers of cryptosporidiosis infection.

Use of public swimming pools by recently infected people can facilitate ongoing circulation of the organism. We are working with pool managers in the region to ensure good systems are in place. This includes increased messaging about avoiding swimming during the period of greatest infectiousness ie. while experiencing symptoms and up to 2 weeks following the last episode of diarrhoea.

Please remind patients not to swim in public swimming pools for two weeks after being ill with diarrhoea, and to be very vigilant about hand washing when anyone in the house has a diarrhoeal illness. Cryptosporidiosis is easily passed on person to person in a household.

A factsheet on cryptosporidiosis and information regarding precautions prior to entering a swimming pool, is available at:

<http://www.rph.org.nz/content/9d5bf27f-48a3-44df-8d47-387d3296b1b1.html>

2. Influenza – Remember vaccination for your patients, co-workers and staff

Influenza arrived early and caused a lot of illness in the Northern hemisphere and it could arrive as early as autumn in New Zealand. This year's influenza vaccine contains two new strains including the virus strains that caused illness in the Northern hemisphere.

Vaccination at the start of the season is the best protection against influenza illness. Influenza is very infectious and easily passed person-to-person, it can cause high morbidity and mortality. Staff absences due to influenza can be difficult to cover especially in the busy winter months.

Long-term Care Facilities (LTCF's)

Maintain high levels of vaccination in LTCF's and be alert for outbreaks. Influenza and ILI respiratory illnesses can be particularly severe in Long-Term Care Facilities (LTCF) due person-to-person transmission and any underlying health conditions of residents.

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Further Resources on Flu

Further information on recognising outbreaks of Influenza-like illness, infection control advice to minimise transmission, testing and treatment for influenza, will shortly be available on the RPH website www.rph.org.nz under “resources” (‘influenza’).

The 2013 Influenza Kit and copies of posters and other resources are available at <http://www.influenza.org.nz/?t=890>.

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