

General **Communique**

Communicable Diseases Branch

Queensland Public Health and Scientific Services (QPHaSS)



School Principals:

Acute respiratory infections (ARI)

April 2025

Acute respiratory infections (ARIs) can spread quickly in schools where large numbers of students learn and play in close contact. ARI prevention is a joint effort. Parents, caregivers, and staff need to work together and take the necessary precautions to prevent ARIs from spreading.

Key messages for schools

The school community has a role in ARI prevention:

- **Stay protected** by getting your free vaccinations in 2025 for influenza, COVID-19, and RSV if eligible.
- **Stay at home** when sick (including keeping sick children home from school or childcare)
- **Clean your hands** regularly and thoroughly with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand rub.
- If you need to leave the house while unwell, **maintain physical distance** from others and **consider wearing a mask** when you cannot physically distance.
- **Practice good respiratory hygiene** by:
 - coughing or sneezing into a tissue or the inside of your elbow
 - discarding used tissues immediately in a bin, and
 - cleaning your hands thoroughly.
- **Clean frequently touched surfaces** such as door handles, tapware, tabletops, remote controls, mobile devices (e.g. phones, laptops etc.), benchtops and fridge doors and clean your hands after cleaning.
- **Ensure good ventilation** by opening windows and doors and spending time outside in the fresh air each day.

Acute Respiratory Infections (ARIs)

Viruses that cause ARIs, including influenza (flu), COVID-19 and respiratory syncytial virus (RSV), can cause significant disruption to schools and the wider community. While the viruses are different, the strategies to prevent them are largely the same. ARIs can cause serious illness and complications in young children.

Symptoms

The symptoms of ARIs are varied and may include:

- Fever
- Cough
- Difficulty breathing
- Runny nose/nasal congestion
- Muscle and joint pain
- Tiredness or extreme exhaustion
- Headache
- Sore throat, and
- Sometimes gastrointestinal symptoms.

Anyone experiencing ARI symptoms and who is concerned should contact their general practitioner or call 13HEALTH (13 43 25 84) for advice.

Vaccination

Schools should encourage their students, staff, parents, and caregivers to get vaccinated to prevent the spread of ARI's.

Influenza

Free influenza vaccination is available for all Queenslanders 6 months of age and older.

The free flu vaccine is available from GPs, pharmacies, and other vaccination service providers. The flu vaccine can be given at the same time as other vaccines (e.g. COVID-19). Find out [Where to get vaccinated | Vaccination Matters \(initiatives.qld.gov.au\)](https://www.health.qld.gov.au/initiatives/qld.gov.au).

COVID-19

Free COVID-19 vaccination is recommended for all people aged 18 years or older, and for children aged 6 months to less than 18 years with medical conditions that may increase their risk of severe illness or death from COVID-19. The [COVID-19 booster eligibility checker](#) can be used to check eligibility.

Further doses every 6 or 12 months are recommended, or may be considered, based on an individual's age and their risk factors for severe disease.

RSV

The Queensland Paediatric Respiratory Syncytial Virus Prevention Program provides free RSV immunisation in pregnancy and to eligible infants and young children.

For more information see the [Queensland Paediatric Respiratory Syncytial Virus Prevention Program | Queensland Health](#)

Resources

- [Queensland Health Disease prevention in education and care services](#)
- [Influenza \(the flu\) | Communicable disease control guidance \(health.qld.gov.au\)](#)
- [Influenza in education and care services](#)
- [Flu prevention resources for education sector](#)
- [Influenza \(the flu\) | Health and wellbeing | Queensland Government \(www.qld.gov.au\)](#)
- [Queensland Government - COVID-19 in Queensland](#)
- [Children, young people and parents — COVID-19.](#)
- [COVID-19 | Health and wellbeing | Queensland Government](#)
- [Respiratory syncytial virus \(RSV\) | Health and wellbeing | Queensland Government](#)

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