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MEDIA RELEASE

PROTECTING YOURSELF AGAINST THE FLU

With the recent outbreak of a new strain of influenza A (swine flu) in Mexico and America, Wimmera Health Care Group is urging people to be vigilant in protecting themselves and others from the flu this winter.

Head of the infection control department, Jan Spencer has reinforced that good health hygiene practices can greatly reduce the chance of getting the flu or passing it on to others.

She said that people should always cough and sneeze into a disposable tissue and wash their hands afterwards. "If you have the flu, you should avoid public places and close contact with others, especially children and the elderly. You should also seek medical help from your GP if you are unwell with a fever, cough and fatigue" she said.

Mrs Spencer said that people should not panic about swine flu. "As yet, no cases of this strain of influenza have been identified in Australia. We have very good communicable disease surveillance and control systems in place to detect and respond to outbreaks of illness" she said.

"If anyone has travelled to Mexico, California, Arizona, New Mexico or Texas in the past seven days or so and have pneumonia or an influenza-like illness such as fever, cough and fatigue, they should contact their GP immediately".

Mrs Spencer also said that it is advisable to mention your symptoms when making an appointment, as you might be required to wear a mask or be directed to another area to protect other patients.

"The majority of cases in Mexico have occurred in healthy young adults. Antiviral drugs available through GPs and pharmacies can help against swine influenza viruses" she said.

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