

## Mini—FLU CLINIC ON Tuesday 17th March 2009

All patients aged 65 yrs and older are eligible for “free” influenza and pneumococcal vaccinations—if you identify as Aboriginal or Torres Straight Islander you are eligible from the age of 50 years. You may receive a e-mail, SMS or letter of invitation if you are in that age group or suffer with a chronic medical condition—eg. Diabetes or asthma about this upcoming clinic. In the past 2 years we have successfully run a “free” clinic where the cost of the consult with Dr Mitchell and Susie the practice nurse is covered by medicare—if you are not eligible for the government funded vaccine the flu-vax will cost \$22. We will have appointments available for the first 50 patients to register at reception. If demand is high for those not eligible for the funded vaccine, ASFMC will consider running a similar clinic on a Saturday morning to facilitate more patients who have work commitments in being immunised. At the moment there is no set date for a Saturday morning clinic.

### What are the influenza??

- chills, shiver- (temperature >
- headache
- sore throat
- sneezing
- fatigue, tiredness



### symptoms of

ing, and fever 38C)

- muscle aches and pains
- stuffy or runny nose
- dry cough
- trouble breathing

One of the most effective ways to protect you, your friends and family from the flu is to practise good personal hygiene.

1. Cover your nose and mouth when you sneeze or cough
2. Wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20sec
3. Don't share personal items—towels, toothbrushes, eating utensils, cups etc
4. Clean surfaces—tables, fridge doors, sinks etc with detergent or soap and water
5. Avoid close contact with others—avoid going out in public when you are sick. Sometimes the best thing a GP can do is give you a medical certificate to stay home from work or school when sick.

## WE DO NOT BULK BILL

Since we opened our practice in September 2006 we have been a fee paying clinic and this policy has not changed. There have been increasing number of new patients who seem to be assuming that because they ask, we should be obliged to bulk bill. This is not the case—and has never been that way. Unfortunately the Australian Government (current and past) do not believe the medicare rebate needs to be adjusted to the Consumer Price Index and over the last 20 + years this gap continues to widen between what medicare rebates pay and what it costs to run a medical clinic. Your local government member would be the best person to direct any concerns regarding the gap payments.

It is at the doctor's discretion to bulk-bill occasionally—but ASFMC is providing a service, just like any other business. We have overhead costs—outgoing expenses, wages, power bills etc and no other business that I am aware of in Alice Springs would let you purchase a product and not pay for it. As other businesses may state “Do not ask for credit” please be mindful that is what patients are doing when they arrive for an appointment without wallets, or credit cards etc. To the best of our knowledge no medical clinics routinely bulk bill in Alice Springs.

ASFMC has no duty of care for patients who cannot pay for the service and we do not tolerate consistent breaches of our policy. DNAs—“Did Not Attend” appointments continue to happen and our \$40 non-medicare refundable fee is well known. Our practice manager has made numerous exceptions in the past only to be “burnt”. We also do not tolerate rude or abusive language—please be mindful that it is our right to choose NOT to provide any health care.



**ALICE SPRINGS FAMILY  
MEDICAL CENTRE**

## NEWSLETTER 9/09

ASFMC Management would like to welcome new GP Registrar Dr. Simon Wilson who started work in early February 2009. Due to increased capacity with three GPs we are now able to “open our books” again to all new patients.

Please nominate if you have a preferred practitioner and the reception staff will endeavour to fulfill your request but this may not always be possible.

ASFMC Management is excited at the new prospects for our clinic as we increase the services we can provide. We value all feedback as we continue to grow and expand.

Happy New Year for 2009. Wow—how the year has flown!! We have now been open for over 2 years and continue to grow—currently we have close to 5500 active patients on our books.

**Please respect the no smoking policy on the entire grounds of the clinic.**



## ALICE SPRINGS FAMILY MEDICAL CENTRE

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Proud to be working with the community  
to improve Central Australian Health

**17 Stuart Highway  
Entrance off Kekwick Ave  
Parking at rear  
Phone 08 8952 7774 ALL HOURS**

## PERTUSSIS—WHOOPING COUGH

This is a highly contagious, acute respiratory infection caused by the bacteria *Bordetella pertussis*. Pertussis is on the rise in Australia, with most cases now diagnosed in adolescents and adults where the disease is commonly atypical. Several recent studies indicate that adults—mothers in particular—are a frequent source of pertussis infection to unvaccinated or incompletely vaccinated infants. Pertussis infection in newborns can be severe, resulting in prolonged hospital admission, extensive multi-system disease, brain damage and even death.

Vaccinating all persons in close contact with the newborn to prevent adult-to-child transmission known as the “cocoon strategy” reduces the risk of transmission. Good immunisation coverage in children (if the schedule is fully given) means that adults are now the most frequent source of pertussis infection. In 2006, adults > 20 yrs of age accounted for 90% of the 11,000 pertussis notifications. Alice Springs had a pertussis outbreak late last year, that involved childcare centres and schools informing parents of potential exposure to their children due to unimmunised children becoming infected.

ASFMC stocks adelcel and adelcelpolio vaccines that are not covered by the government, when compared to the ADT vaccine. ADT covers you against tetanus and diphtheria but not pertussis, and not polio. If you are intending any overseas travel in the next few years ASFMC highly recommends adelcelpolio. Polio endemic countries include Afghanistan, India, Nigeria and Pakistan. The World Health Organisation stated in 2007 “Until global certification of poliomyelitis eradication, all areas remain at risk of importation of poliovirus and we must ensure high population immunity to maintain polio-free status”. Any travel involving an overseas destination, terminal at the airport etc carries the risk of aerosol transmission. Both vaccines last for 10 years with adelcelpolio costing \$90 and adelcel \$45.

All younger adults should consider their immunisation status—boostrix given in school covers pertussis for 10 yrs eg. given age 13 yrs—current until 23 yrs. We would recommend all parents (or parents to be, in the process of family planning) to consider updating their immunity. New mothers who have delivered at Alice Springs Hospital may have been offered the vaccination (cost covered by the hospital) after their baby was born—we would strongly recommend all close family members—fathers, grandparents, older siblings consider getting vaccinated to reduce household transmissions. ASFMC would also recommend all child-care and health care workers proactively consider their role in potentially transmitting this bacteria—the cost of any consult and the cost of the vaccine could be tax deductible for work expenses.

## Human Papillomavirus (HPV)

This is the name for a group of viruses that can cause skin warts, genital warts and some cancers. Anyone who has ever had sexual contact could have HPV. It is so common that close to 90% of people will have had genital HPV infection at some time in their lives. There are certain types of HPV that can lead to cervical cell changes that may lead to cervical cancer. Regular pap smears are still essential because the HPV vaccine does not prevent all cervical cancers. Pap smears detect abnormal changes to cells in the cervix so treatment can start before cancer develops.

Gardasil has been the subsidised vaccine that the Australian government has been providing—covering the \$150 cost of each injection. This “free programme” will now finish on the 30th June 2009, so to be eligible for the free vaccines all women aged 12—26 years of age (who have not completed it through school) **must have started the course with their first dose of the vaccine on or before the 30th June 2009 and complete all 3 doses by the 31st December 2009.**

**All patients who have started this vaccination at ASFMC will receive an e-mail reminder shortly and depending on demand ASFMC will be running a HPV clinic on Tuesday 17th March 2009 in the afternoon as we have done in previous years—please register your interest at reception.**

Accordingly to our recall system there are > 140 women who have not completed the schedule. We will have capacity for the first 50 women who make an appointment for that “free clinic”.

If you do not complete the full course before the 31st December 2009, it can still be prescribed by a GP but will cost you \$150 + just for the vaccine. You would then need to book a follow-up appointment with our practice nurse to have the injection.

ASFMC Management strongly advise our female patient population to take advantage of this offer. If you are unable to make the “Free HPV clinic” you can still book in with Susie our practice nurse (cost \$20—rebate \$11.10), or remember to ask the GP when you visit if the reason for your consult is for a different matter and get it done at the same time. If you, or a friend, or your sister or daughter have not completed the full course of the HPV vaccinations, consider letting them know about the upcoming clinic.

## ECSTASY

Ecstasy is the name commonly given to MethyleneDioxy-MethAmphetamine (MDMA). Tablets sold as ecstasy can contain a range of amphetamine-related substances, and other substances such as ketamine and caffeine. It is often made in backyard labs, leading to wide variations in drug quality. It is commonly sold as small tablets which vary in size and colour, and are often imprinted with a symbol or logo. Ecstasy can also come in powder form which can be inhaled through the nose (snorted) or injected.

Short-term effects include:

- feelings of closeness with other people and euphoria
- Increased confidence and lack of inhibitions
- Increased blood pressure and heart rate
- Nausea, teeth grinding and jaw clenching
- Increase in body temperature

Ecstasy also produces a hangover effect (“come down”) which may include loss of appetite, insomnia, depression, muscle aches and difficulty concentrating. Long term effects may include depression, anxiety disorders and memory and cognitive impairment.

**The unknown nature of the contents, contaminants and dosage of drugs sold as ecstasy is probably the greatest source of risk.** Many tablets contain no MDMA and when substances like PMA (ParaMethoxyAmphetamine) are substituted for MDMA the consequences can be fatal (recent overdose of teenager in WA from Big Day Out). Taking other drugs when ecstasy is already in the bloodstream or vice versa) is dangerous. Combining ecstasy with amphetamines increases the effect on the heart. Combining ecstasy with alcohol increases the risk of dehydration. Most often the cause of acute adverse reactions with ecstasy is a result of overheating and dehydration—dancing in clubs, rave parties, not drinking enough water etc.

**THINK TWICE NEXT TIME SOMEONE OFFERS YOU A PILL—HOW DO YOU REALLY KNOW WHAT’S IN IT, OR WHAT IT MIGHT DO TO YOU?**

