

COPING WITH THE STRESS OF AN INFLUENZA OUTBREAK

Tip Sheet #7
MAY 28TH 2009

Coping with the Stress of an Influenza Outbreak
H1N1 Influenza 09 (Human Swine Influenza)

Tips to help your family cope with possible stress:

Stay updated about what is happening with the flu by getting information from the Australian Government website. **CLICK HERE** or cut and paste the following address into your web browser.
<http://www.healthemergency.gov.au>

Stay with good health hygiene and avoid close contact with others if you are unwell with flu - which may help prevent infection spreading.

Stay connected: Seek support from friends and family by talking to them on the telephone or communicating through e-mail and other ways you usually keep in touch via the internet. Remember to let your children stay connected with friends through these methods in the usual way they do in your family.

Minimise children's exposure to stressful media coverage, for example, repeated images of horror, fear.

Emailing and text messaging may be positive resources for connecting with others and support. Again use good information and support, but watch for any sensational or negative aspects.

Remember children's questions are ways of understanding: answer simply and honestly; don't be afraid of saying you don't know, but reassure your child and, if appropriate, find out together.

If parents are anxious, children are usually "tuned in" and may react with different, often challenging, behaviour or maybe even withdrawal. Be "tuned in" to their issues, and remember, affection is reassuring in circumstances of uncertainty.

If home quarantine is in place, as far as possible continue regular routines of meals, healthy diet and exercise opportunities and activities.

Many feelings arise in challenging crisis times like these: frustration; anxiety; loneliness; boredom and fear are all possible responses. Share feelings when you need to, but remember hope and positive feelings will help us to deal with problems.

The National Swine Flu Hotline is contactable 1802007

Care, affection, connection, communication and things you usually find helpful in difficult times can see you through problems if they arise.