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MEDIA RELEASE

ANY FLU CAN MAKE ASTHMA WORSE

The Asthma Foundation of Western Australia warns that a focus solely on swine flu could put people with asthma at risk. Recent findings in the United States shows that forty percent of people in New York hospitalised from swine flu also have asthma. Whilst this is a timely warning the Asthma Foundation of Western Australia urges all people with asthma to be vigilant this winter because all colds and flu can trigger asthma or worsen asthma control.

There are many forms of the influenza virus, all of which can potentially cause asthma attacks, worsening asthma or hospitalisation for those with asthma. Almost 80% of asthma attacks in children and 40% in adults are caused by viral infection. Traditionally, hospitalisations due to asthma increase at this time of year, particularly amongst the elderly, a group also at greater risk of viral infection.

Asthma Foundation of WA CEO, John Gummer says, "As with any other time of year, it is very important to keep your asthma under control. This includes having regular reviews with your doctor, taking the proper medication regularly as indicated on your Asthma Action Plan and avoiding your asthma triggers."

Any viral infection, including swine flu and other forms of flu can make asthma worse. Being vigilant about hygiene and keeping up regular visits with your doctor are crucial at this time of year.

To reduce the spread of infection and to make asthma control much easier it is important that we all do the following:

- Keep your hands away from your eyes, nose and mouth
- Wash your hands regularly with soap and water or an alcohol-based gel that does not require water
- Use tissues to wipe your nose, then discard them
- Wash your hands after blowing your nose or covering your mouth for a cough or sneeze and before eating or preparing food
- Do not share cups or cutlery
- Clean surfaces in your home if a member of your household is sick
- If you're unwell, stay home

The Asthma Foundation of WA urges anyone with asthma to:

- always carry their reliever medication
- continue to take preventer medication regularly
- update your Asthma Action Plan with your doctor and follow it if you get a cold or flu
- avoid exercise if you have a cold or flu
- know what to do in an emergency

Further information about asthma can be found at www.asthmawa.org.au or by phoning 1800 645 130.

-ENDS-

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