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2012 school year brings benefits for immunisation

The Australian General Practice Network (AGPN) is reminding parents about changes to the Family Tax Benefit Part A Supplement this year, in which children need to be *fully immunised* for parents to receive the benefit which is worth \$726 per child.

AGPN Chair, Dr Emil Djakic said that while the changes don't come into effect until July 1 2012, the beginning of the school year is a good time to start 'regrouping' with your family doctor or immunisation provider on immunisations to be done.

"Parents need to ensure their child is fully immunised according to their appropriate age schedule and also check that the information has been sent to the Australian Childhood Immunisation Register or ACIR," Dr Djakic said.

"The Family Assistance Office will get this information from ACIR so they can pay the Family Tax Benefit Part A Supplement.

"The changes to Family Tax Benefit Part A supplement were announced last year and will replace the Maternity Immunisation Allowance which comes to an end July 1, 2012. These changes mean that children need to be fully immunised according to their age for payments to be made at ages one, two and five years of age.

"Even though the adjusted incentive linked to the Family Tax Benefit Part A doesn't take effect until July 2012, the relevant paperwork confirming a child's immunisation status must be lodged by the end of this financial year.

"This adjusted incentive has been designed to strengthen the nation's rate of immunisation which requires a broad level of coverage in order to be effective.

"The four year-old vaccination, is the final stage in the childhood immunisation program and it protects children against developing:

- Diphtheria
- Tetanus
- whooping cough
- measles
- mumps
- rubella
- polio.

"This vaccination can be taken any time between the ages of 3 ½ years through to four years and one month," Dr Djakic said.

"As children are thrust into a school community setting, the opportunity for rare communicable diseases to take hold can increase substantially. However, with adequate vaccination completed at the beginning of the school year, the risks are reduced significantly," Dr Djakic said.

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