

BACK TO SCHOOL SAFELY DURING PANDEMIC

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Next week's return to school is welcome but all precautions will still have to be taken to prevent the spread of COVID-19 through the community, AMA Queensland President Professor Chris Perry said today.

"ATAGI's decision to approve COVID booster shots for 16 and 17 year olds is a good development, but less than a third of 5-11 year olds in Queensland have had their first jab," Prof Perry said.

"Normally, at this time of year, we would be talking to parents and carers about packing healthy school lunches, making sure backpacks are not too heavy for young spines, the importance of sunscreen and hats, and updating their child's allergy and asthma plans.

"Those things are still important, but as we learn to live with COVID, we must continue to encourage parents and carers to get their children vaccinated and to keep up sensible precautions like social distancing, good hand hygiene, and wearing masks where necessary.

"As booster shots become available for younger age groups, parents should be confident to take them up. Most vaccines require a series of shots to provide maximum protection, and COVID-19 is no different.

"While it still appears to be a mild disease in children and teenagers, it's inevitable that school children will bring the virus home to their families and older relatives.

"When this happens, if children or adults start feeling the symptoms of a cold, they should stay home, do a rapid antigen test if they can or PCR, but stay at home until they are better and seek medical attention if they become very sick.

"The Gold Coast figures showing that one in six people may have been infectious in the community without knowing they had COVID indicates that some people are complacent about COVID, some can't access testing, and some don't want to be tested because of the potential repercussions.

"We need a common sense approach to living with COVID. There will be more variants as COVID-19 continues to mutate, particularly after international borders reopen.

"We have to learn to live with this pandemic, but we still have to take all steps to protect ourselves and our community."

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