



Ministry of Health & Wellness

PRESS STATEMENT

Tuesday 21st February 2023

For Immediate Release

HEALTH & WELLNESS MINISTRY REFUTES ALARMIST MESSAGE REGARDING AN INCREASE IN ILLNESS AFFECTING CHILDREN AND INSUFFICIENT MEDICATION

The Ministry of Health & Wellness is refuting a voice note message issued by the Opposition Chairman Dr. Duane Sands which seeks to suggest that there is an alarming increase in the number of upper respiratory and gastroenteritis infections across the country, the majority of which are occurring in children.

For the purposes of clarification the Ministry wishes to advise that The National Disease Surveillance Unit does not have any information that suggest that there has been a significant increase in the number of Upper Respiratory Infections and Gastroenteritis across the country. Surveillance Teams have reported that both infections are presently being recorded at a numbers consistent with what is expected at this time of year among children and adults. This is measured against a pre-COVID baseline. Further reports provided by health facilities country-wide do not indicate that there is a challenge among hospitalizations in these groupings or a specific challenge with the pediatric population.

The Ministry is also reporting that required medication to treat upper respiratory infection and gastroenteritis is available at public health facilities with the exception of liquid ibuprofen which is as a result of a global shortage.

The public is reminded to follow good respiratory hygiene such as **covering the mouth and nose with a tissue while sneezing and coughing, disposing of the tissue into a trash can after use, and performing hand hygiene using soap and water or alcohol based hand sanitizer after disposing of the tissue.** Respiratory hygiene and cough etiquette can also include measures such as having people who are coughing stay at least 3 feet away from others and having them wear face masks while in common areas. Proper handwashing hygiene is recommended to prevent the transmission of gastroenteritis such as **washing hands after using the toilet or accessing a public space, or playing with pets. Persons are also encouraged to wash their hands before handling food and to ensure that they use clean utensils and surfaces when preparing meals.**

The public is invited to call The National Disease Surveillance Unit at telephone numbers **604-9090 or 604-9091 during regular office hours** should they require more information on Upper Respiratory Infections and Gastroenteritis.

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MEDIA CONTACT:
Ministry of Health & Wellness Bahamas
Tel: 1.242.502.4700
mohwcomms@bahamas.gov.bs