

28 January 2015

The greatest wealth is health

South Western Sydney Local Health District has delivered its report card on the health of people in south western Sydney.

The Health Snapshot highlights the health status and lifestyle behaviours of local residents.

SWSLHD Director of Epidemiology Bin Jalaludin said that the Health Snapshot has identified physical and lifestyle health risks within south western Sydney's population, helping the District target programs to address these areas.

"Our rates of heart disease have fallen by 30 per cent and the numbers of smoke free households are on the rise, but there's still some room for improvement as nearly 60 per cent of people in our population are overweight or obese and 21 per cent still smoke," Dr Jalaludin said.

Only one out of two people in south western Sydney get adequate exercise which Dr Jalaludin said is a timely reminder to be more physically active.

"The Health Snapshot serves as a health and lifestyle risk assessment tool that will prompt people to identify and follow up these risks through making changes in their lifestyle" he said.

With the number of smoke free households reaching 90 per cent, Dr Jalaludin said he was pleased with the result as it shows people can make positive changes if they're supported.

"The reduction in smoking rates within south western Sydney households shows that when people have support, they can and do take control of their own health and lifestyle and take positive steps to improve their wellbeing," Dr Jalaludin said.

This is the first year that the Health Snapshot has been published and South Western Sydney Local Health District's Health Promotion Service Director Mandy Williams said that it can only get better from here.

She said physical activity and a healthy lifestyle are major contributors to reducing a range of illnesses and conditions, including diabetes, cardiovascular disease, some cancers and obesity.

"Just 52 per cent of the people surveyed for the current report met the recommended minimum daily intake of two serves of fruit," Ms Williams said.

There are a number of free programs on offer to create a healthier society, some of which include the Get Healthy telephone coaching service, Go4Fun, Quit for new life, the Healthy Children Initiative programs which focus on addressing childhood obesity, such as Live Life Well @ School and Much & Move. The Make Healthy Normal website also offers healthy living tips and includes a free 10 week health and activity plan.

“It’s only through a whole community approach involving children, families, schools, local physical activity providers and the programs that great changes can be achieved,” she said.

“Go4Fun is one program that we have which can help children above a healthy weight to reach a healthier weight, increase time spent being active, improve fitness and raise self-esteem,” Ms Williams said.

For more information, you can watch the video here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iBvniXPOkxY> or read the report here:

http://www.swsIhd.nsw.gov.au/populationhealth/PH_epidemiology/pdf/SWS_Snapshot.pdf