

27 April 2018

Get vaccinated to beat the flu bug

Free flu jabs will be available from 9am to 2pm on Tuesday 1 May at Liverpool Hospital as part of South Western Sydney Local Health District's campaign to encourage the community to get vaccinated this winter.

The NSW Government is spending a record \$22.75 million on immunisation programs in 2017-18 including funding of free flu jabs for people for a limited time and free flu shots to children up to five years of age.

Free flu shots are already available to members of the community who are pregnant, people over 65 years of age, most Aboriginal people and those with medical conditions such as asthma, diabetes and heart problems.

Acting Director of Public Health, South Western Sydney Local Health District, Dr Kate Alexander said Australia experienced one of the worst flu seasons on record last year with more than 650 flu-related deaths in NSW.

"Vaccination is your best protection against the flu, so we encourage you and your loved ones to get vaccinated against this deadly infection this winter," Dr Alexander said.

"The best time to have the flu vaccine is May to ensure your protection doesn't wane before the flu season peaks. The vaccine takes two weeks to be fully effective.

"Flu vaccines are now available at most GPs, Aboriginal Medical Services and, for children under five years of age, from council and community centres that routinely provide vaccination services."

Free flu shots are available to members of the community who are pregnant, people over 65 years of age, most Aboriginal people and those with medical conditions such as asthma, diabetes and heart problems.

"For a limited time on 1 May, South Western Sydney Local Health District is also making the flu shot available for free to any member of the community at Liverpool Hospital."

Vaccination is the best protection against the flu, but the following steps also help prevent the spread of influenza:

- o Cough and sneeze into your elbow
- o Clean your hands
- o Stay home when sick.

The South Western Sydney Local Health District will be implementing its winter plans for local hospitals, which include procedures for allocating additional resources during periods of high demand, providing free flu vaccinations for frontline health staff and promoting good hygiene practices that help fight the spread of flu.

“The World Health Organization advises this year’s flu vaccine will be a better match to the four circulating strains and offer higher protection than last year. We urge everyone to get the flu jab to build our immunity in the community and beat the flu bug this winter – it could save your life,” Dr Alexander said.

For more information about influenza, see the NSW Health website at www.health.nsw.gov.au