

EMBARGOED TILL FRIDAY, 1 DECEMBER, 2017

HIV TESTING IS FREE, FAST AND CONFIDENTIAL

The South Eastern Sydney Local Health District is encouraging people to know their HIV status in the lead-up to World Aids Day on Friday, 1 December.

There are about 10,000 people living with HIV in NSW and at least 10 per cent of people with HIV do not know that they have the virus and could pass it on to others unknowingly.

Dr Josephine Lusk, Director, Short Street Sexual Health Centre at Kogarah, said it had never been easier to get tested for HIV, and that there was a mix of high quality, safe and innovative testing services available such as express and drop-in clinics offering faster results.

“A person with HIV who is on treatment in 2017 can expect a near-normal life expectancy and to live a healthy life,” Dr Lusk said.

The latest NSW HIV Strategy Data Report shows that 44 per cent of people diagnosed with HIV in the first nine months of this year were diagnosed at a late stage of infection.

The report highlights that while most new HIV infections reported in January to September this year were in homosexually active men (73 per cent), heterosexual exposure accounted for 22 per cent of all newly reported infections.

The new data also shows that more than one-third (37 per cent) of HIV diagnoses were made by GPs.

“People should talk to their GP about having a HIV test or contact the NSW Sexual Health Infolink to find the best testing option for them,” Dr Lusk said.

“HIV testing is available at a range of different health services including GPs, Family Planning Clinics, Aboriginal medical services, sexual health clinics, community-based rapid HIV testing sites or a self-sampling dried blood spot (DBS) HIV kit can be ordered online

<https://www.hivtest.health.nsw.gov.au/>.”

Most new HIV infections are reported in homosexually active men, however, NSW Health is also recommends testing for:

- Those diagnosed with a sexually transmissible infection (STI), or hepatitis B or C;
- People who are from or have a partner from a high-prevalence country;
- People who have had sex without a condom while traveling in a high-prevalence country;
- Heterosexual men and women with multiple partners, or a recent partner change; and
- People who have sexual contact with someone who is at risk of HIV infection.

Dr Lusk said once a person is diagnosed they can start treatment and improve their health outcome as well prevent the virus from being passed to others.

“Many new infections come from people who do not know they have HIV. HIV testing is essential to moving towards ending HIV transmissions in NSW by 2020,” she said.

For confidential information on where to get tested, call the NSW Sexual Health Infolink on **1800 451 624** or for more information about HIV testing, visit health.nsw.gov.au/hiv-test.

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