

Friday, 21 July, 2017.

DON'T FORGET TO VACCINATE AGAINST FLU THIS WINTER

The South Eastern Sydney Local Health District (SESLHD) is reminding residents that it is not too late to be vaccinated against flu despite the onset of winter.

Each year up to one in five people in NSW are diagnosed with influenza and between 800 – 1000 people die from flu-related illnesses.

Vaccination is FREE for those in high-risk groups including those with chronic conditions, the elderly, pregnant women and Aboriginal people.

This year's flu vaccine covers the four influenza strains circulating in Australia.

In SESLHD, there were 378 laboratory confirmed influenza notifications in June 2017 compared to 172 for the same period last year.

Dr Catherine Bateman-Steel, Acting Public Health Director, SESLHD, said the increase in notifications can be attributed to improved and more sensitive testing measures.

"The pattern of disease so far has been similar to previous years and is not unusual except for the earlier start which NSW Health expected," Dr Bateman-Steel said.

"Flu vaccination is free for higher-risk groups including pregnant women, people with certain chronic medical conditions – such as severe asthma, diabetes or heart disease – and Aboriginal people aged six months to five years, or over 15 years."

People are encouraged to visit their family doctor first, or talk to their pharmacist if they are experiencing flu-like symptoms and to stay home to recover to prevent the spread of infection to others.

As well as having a flu shot, the following steps can help prevent the spread of flu:

- Avoid people you know are sick with flu
- Avoid crowded places where there may be other people sick with flu
- If you have the symptoms, don't visit vulnerable people or aged care facilities
- Cover your mouth when coughing or sneezing, use disposable tissues, and dispose of tissues immediately after use
- Wash your hands regularly, especially after coughing, sneezing or blowing your nose.

HealthDirect (1800 022 222) is also available day and night and will connect you with a health professional who can provide safe and practical healthcare advice.

For more information see the [NSW Health influenza fact sheet](#) and the [Pregnant women and influenza page](#).

-ENDS-

South Eastern Sydney Local Health District

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healthdirect AUSTRALIA – providing expert health advice 24 hours a day to NSW residents – Tel. 1800 022 222