

27 April, 2018

Get vaccinated to beat the flu bug

South Eastern Sydney Local Health District (SESLHD) has launched a campaign to encourage the local community to get vaccinated against flu this winter.

A community activation clinic and pop-up information stall was held recently at South Maroubra's Lexington Place in conjunction with the fortnightly outreach program, 'Coffee and Conversations.' This raised awareness about the importance of vaccination following one of the worst flu seasons on record last year, which caused over 11,000 cases and 49 flu-related deaths among SESLHD residents.

As part of NSW Health's \$1.75 million immunisation campaign, visitors to the stall were able to receive a free flu jab, and speak with health professionals about precautions to prevent the spread of flu.

Professor Mark Ferson, Director, Public Health Unit, South Eastern Sydney Local Health District said vaccination is your best protection against the flu.

"Providing free vaccinations at the Maroubra clinic enabled staff to improve vaccine coverage and educate the community that vaccine is recommended for everyone. In all, 77 people were vaccinated, including 23 children under the age of five years, who were vaccinated by a doctor from Sydney Children's Hospital, Randwick," Professor Ferson said.

"We encourage you and your loved ones to get vaccinated against this deadly infection this winter. The best time to have the flu vaccine is in April or 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, and from some community pharmacies."

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.

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

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

The South Eastern 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," Professor Ferson said.

The NSW Government will spend a record \$22.75 million on state-wide immunisation programs in 2017-18, including \$3.5 million for free flu shots to children up to five years of age to boost protection against flu in our communities.

For more information about influenza, see the NSW Health website:

www.health.nsw.gov.au/flu