

Monday 30 May 2022

FREE FLU SHOTS FOR ALL IN JUNE

A free flu jab will be available to all NSW residents in a month-long blitz from June 1 in an effort to combat this year's expected severe influenza season.

With a sharp increase in flu cases already, the NSW Government will fund flu vaccinations at GPs and pharmacies until June 30.

Chief Health Officer Dr Kerry Chant said there were 1,140 cases of respiratory illness notified this week, compared with 766 in the previous week and 150 presentations and admissions to hospitals.

"We strongly urge everyone over six months of age to get a flu shot as soon as possible to protect themselves and their loved ones, as the virus is easily spread and potentially deadly," Dr Chant said.

"This is particularly important for those in high-risk groups, such as the elderly and children aged six months to five years. If you live in an aged or disability care facility, are aged over 65 or are immunocompromised, now is the time to book in.

"We also recommend a COVID-19 winter booster if you are eligible, as both flu and COVID-19 vaccines can be given at the same time."

The Commonwealth Government provides vaccines for vulnerable populations, and funds GPs through the MBS to administer vaccines. However, as COVID-19 has taught us, the role of pharmacies is crucial and the NSW Government is funding community pharmacies to deliver influenza vaccinations this June.

NSW Health has also permitted pharmacies to administer flu vaccines to children aged five years old, reduced from 10 years, making it easier for families to be vaccinated together. GPs will be reimbursed for any flu stock they have already purchased that is used in the month of June for this vaccination program.

The Commonwealth Government provides free flu vaccine for those considered to be at higher risk of severe illness from the flu, including:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people from six months of age
- Children from six months to under five years of age
- People with serious health conditions (including severe asthma, diabetes, cancer, immune disorders, obesity, kidney, heart, lung or liver disease)
- Pregnant women
- People aged 65 and over.

Other protective measures individuals can take include staying at home if sick and washing your hands. Find out more about how to protect yourself from the flu at nsw.gov.au/flu