



Media Release

NSW further expands access to JE vaccine

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NSW FURTHER EXPANDS ACCESS TO JE VACCINE

NSW has expanded access to free Japanese encephalitis (JE) vaccine to a further 14 locations bordering the existing eligible areas in regional NSW from Tuesday 28 November.

This means that, for residents living, or regularly working, in the Gunnedah, Gwydir, Inverell, Liverpool Plains, Tamworth, Tenterfield and Upper Hunter local government areas (LGAs) who meet the below eligibility criteria can now access the vaccine through their local General Practitioner (GP), pharmacist, or Aboriginal Medical Service.

In NSW, a free Japanese encephalitis virus vaccination is available for people aged two months or older who live or routinely work in 55 regional Local Government Areas (LGAs) with identified JE risk AND:

- regularly spend time outdoors placing them at risk of mosquito bites, OR
- are experiencing homelessness, OR
- are living in conditions with limited mosquito protection (e.g. tents, caravans, dwellings with no insect screens), OR
- are engaging in prolonged outdoor flood recovery (clean-up) efforts, including repeated professional or volunteer deployments.

Dr Peter Murray, Acting Public Health Director, said the decision to broaden the scope of LGAs considered at-risk of possible JE transmission was made after health and environmental experts carefully considered surveillance data from the past two mosquito seasons alongside vaccine stock availability.

“Although we’re anticipating a dry and hot summer, which means lower mosquito numbers, the experts determined that until ecological and climate factors behind JE transmission were better understood it was important to expand eligibility to an additional 14 LGAs,” Peter said.

“I would encourage those people living or working in the LGAs of Gunnedah, Gwydir, Inverell, Liverpool Plains, Tamworth, Tenterfield and Upper Hunter who are at greater risk of mosquito bites to consider vaccination” Peter said.

JE is a serious disease caused by the JE virus, however only around one per cent of people infected with the JE virus will experience symptoms.

JE is spread to humans by infected mosquitoes. People are not able to pass the virus to other people. Humans also cannot get infected with the virus by touching an infected animal or eating animal products.

“It’s important to be mindful that mosquitoes in NSW can carry a range of viruses, including Murray Valley Encephalitis virus, Kunjin virus, Ross River virus, Barmah Forest virus, as well as JE virus. Vaccine is only available for JE, so avoiding mosquito bites is the most important way of preventing these infections,” Peter said.

Peter said the key to protecting yourself from JE and other mosquito borne infections is avoiding mosquito bites.

Protect yourself and your family by:

- covering openings such as windows and doors with insect screens and checking there are no gaps in them
- removing items that might collect water (such as old tyres, empty pots) outside your house where mosquitoes can breed
- improving drainage on your property so that water does not become stagnant
- wearing light, loose-fitting long-sleeved shirts, long pants and covered footwear and socks, especially around dusk and dawn
- applying repellent to all areas of exposed skin, using repellents that contain DEET, picaridin, or oil of lemon eucalyptus
- re-applying repellent regularly, particularly after swimming, being sure to always apply sunscreen first and then apply repellent
- using insecticide sprays, vapour dispensing units and mosquito coils to repel mosquitos (mosquito coils should only be used outside).

For further information on JE virus and ways to protect yourself visit:
<https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/jevaccine>