

Date: 14 May 2018

Get vaccinated to beat the flu bug this winter

Patients and visitors to John Hunter Hospital received free flu vaccinations today as part of Hunter New England Local Health District's campaign to encourage the community to get vaccinated this winter.

The flu vaccine is being provided free for a limited time in communities across the state as part of NSW Health's \$1.75 million immunisation campaign following one of the worst flu seasons on record last year, which caused over 650 flu-related deaths.

"Vaccination is your best protection against the flu, so we encourage you and your loved ones to get vaccinated against this deadly infection this winter," Dr David Durrheim, Hunter New England Health Public Health Physician, said.

"The best time to have the flu vaccine is now, 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 Aboriginal Medical Services that routinely provide vaccination services."

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.

"To raise awareness and encourage more people to get their vaccination this year, we made the flu shot available for free to any community member visiting John Hunter Hospital today."

Vaccination is the best protection against flu. The following steps help prevent the spread:

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

Hunter New England 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 likely 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," Dr Durrheim 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](#).