

Friday, June 1 2018

OUR HOSPITALS ARE READY TO TACKLE WINTER

With the start of Winter, hospitals across Sydney Local Health District have again boosted staff numbers and put in place additional measures for the busy period.

Dr Teresa Anderson, Chief Executive of Sydney Local Health District, said more than 30 additional full-time equivalent staff are being recruited at hospitals across the District to meet the increased winter demand.

“The winter months are a busy time for any hospital and our focus is always to ensure our patients are seen as quickly as possible,” Dr Anderson said.

“We have added extra staff for the season to assist with the demand and also to cover any of our workers who may fall ill over the period.”

In addition, a nursing clinic at Croydon Health Centre will extend its opening hours from 5.00pm to 9.00pm Monday to Friday during the winter period.

The District experienced a significant rise in activity in the 2017 winter period. From July to September alone, more than 42,592 people presented to emergency departments across the District, an increase of 3,340 or 8.5 per cent on the previous year.

Sydney Local Health District is encouraging the community to go to their GP for treatment of less serious illnesses, to ensure emergency departments are freed-up for emergencies.

To further ensure hospitals can meet the demand, the District has enhanced systems to monitor and manage patient numbers.

These enhancements include dedicated Allied Health Rapid Discharge teams, patient flow experts and additional pharmacists at Royal Prince Alfred (RPA) and Concord Hospitals to coordinate discharge requirements leading up to and during weekends.

Additional physiotherapists will assist the weekend demand in emergency departments at RPA and Concord Hospitals; after-hours staffing at Canterbury Hospital has been increased; and staffing has also been boosted at Balmain Hospital.

Renovations are underway at RPA to increase the physical capacity to respond to those patients who are most unwell.

“These new measures allow staff to manage patterns of patient admissions so they can better manage bed demand and patient flow to help avoid delays.”

The NSW Government is spending a record \$22.75 million on state-wide immunisation programs in 2017-18. This includes \$3.5 million for free flu shots to children up to five years of age and a \$1.75 million immunisation and influenza prevention campaign.

A community vaccination clinic at Redfern Health Centre in May provided free flu shots to 215 members of the community and helped increase awareness of the importance of the flu shot to prevent the spread of influenza.

The District has been working with the Primary Health Network and Residential Aged Care Facilities to help them prepare and educate staff and patients about preventative measures to stay healthy during winter.

In addition, the District has enhanced its aged care services to be able to more quickly treat older people in their homes and residential aged care facilities and reduce the need for admissions to hospital.

Sydney Local Health District encouraged staff to get their flu shots early, holding special staff vaccination days at RPA and Concord Hospitals. More than 6,000 staff have had their annual flu shot already.

NSW Health has made the flu vaccine mandatory for staff who work in Intensive Care Units (ICUs) and cancer, transplant, neonatal and birth/labour wards in the state's public health facilities, to protect our most vulnerable from the flu.

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

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