

8 April 2022

## Be a health hero this winter – get vaccinated for COVID and flu

This winter, health professionals are worried that we could see a huge increase in the number of flu and other respiratory illnesses in addition to COVID-19 cases.

Wentworth Healthcare, provider of the Nepean Blue Mountains Primary Health Network (NBMPHN), is urging the community to get vaccinated against the flu and to ensure that their COVID-19 vaccinations are up-to-date, by getting their booster or winter dose before it's too late.

Lizz Reay, CEO of Wentworth Healthcare said, "Over the last two winters international and state borders have been mostly closed, and last winter we were all in lockdown. In addition, we had mask mandates and social distancing which meant that we didn't see the usual number of flu cases," she said.

"Now that we have opened up and are getting back to our normal way of life, we are likely to see an increase in flu and other respiratory illnesses, in addition to COVID-19 infections this winter," she said.

"To protect yourself and your family, we are urging people to get the flu vaccine as soon possible and to ensure that their COVID-19 vaccinations are up-to-date. This means getting your kids over 5 years vaccinated for COVID-19 if they haven't been, getting a COVID-19 booster if you are due or getting a COVID-19 winter dose, if you are eligible," said Ms Reay.

The additional COVID-19 winter dose vaccine, can be given from four months or longer after an eligible person has received their first booster dose, or from four months after a confirmed COVID-19 infection, if this occurred since the person's first COVID-19 booster dose.

People who are eligible for **COVID-19 winter dose** are:

- Adults aged 65 years and older
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 50 years and older
- Residents of aged care or disability care facilities
- People aged 16 years and older who are immunocompromised

"In addition, people 70 years and over, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 50 years and older, should also consider getting the free pneumococcal vaccine this winter. I encourage these groups to talk to their GP about this vaccine," she said.

Free flu vaccines are available to certain eligible people from mid-April under the National Immunisation Program. Flu and COVID-19 vaccines are available from GPs, pharmacies, community health clinics, Aboriginal Medical Services, and other vaccination providers in the area.

"I'd like to say to everyone in our community, **be your own health hero** this winter and protect yourself by getting vaccinated," Ms Reay said.

**For interviews or further information contact:**

[Communications@nbmphn.com.au](mailto:Communications@nbmphn.com.au) or call 02 4708 8100 and ask for the Communications team.