

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

20<sup>th</sup> June 2022

### **Make winter about you, not the flu**

#### **- free flu shot available at NSW GPs and Pharmacies until the end of this month**

#### **Northern Sydney community urged to be winter resilient as flu cases rise**

Sydney North Health Network (SNHN) is working closely with local General Practitioners and Physicians in urging the community to take important steps over winter to stay well, as cases of influenza (flu) rise, along with COVID-19.

The past two years saw a drop in flu rates due to reduced exposure to the virus, increased social interaction, and the reopening of international borders, however the past months have already seen a rise in flu cases, coupled with the ongoing risk of COVID-19.

NSW has reported more than 55,800 cases of flu so far this year (January to June 2022), with more than 6,100, cases in Northern Sydney Local Health District alone compared to six cases for the same period in 2021. [1]

The Australian Government is investing \$2.1 billion to protect Australians against influenza and COVID-19 this winter.

Professor Simon Willcock, General Practitioner and Sydney North Health Network Deputy Chair, said, “Flu is a highly contagious respiratory illness caused by influenza viruses. Unfortunately, anyone of any age, can get it (even healthy people). The flu can cause mild to severe illness and can even lead to death.

“Flu is different from the common cold and COVID-19, although symptoms may be similar. It is possible to get the flu and COVID-19 at the same time.

“Vaccination is your best protection against serious illness this flu season.

“A free flu shot is now available for all NSW residents aged over six months, from **1 June until 30 June**. You can get a free flu shot at your GP or pharmacy.

“If you haven’t already, I encourage you and your family to book in for a free flu shot this month and stay up-to-date with COVID-19 boosters.”

To further help our northside community members plan for winter and stay well this coming winter SNHN is releasing a handy, personal ‘Winter Resilience Checklist’. Australia Post will deliver these checklists in the latter half of June.

Dr Willcock added, “The key to staying well over winter is being prepared, building physical and mental resilience. This is particularly important for those people at high risk of illness including adults aged over 65 years, children under five years, people with chronic medical conditions including asthma, diabetes, or heart disease, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and pregnant women.

“I also urge everyone to help protect others by staying home if you’re unwell, practising good personal hygiene, and seeing your doctor early. Don’t wait until symptoms worsen before speaking with your general practitioner.

“By taking these steps to protect yourself and your family during winter, you’ll have the best chance to stay well and avoid serious illness, so you can get on with doing the things you enjoy,” said Dr Willcock.

Those northern Sydney residents who have cold or flu symptoms and may be finding it difficult to get an appointment with their General Practitioner can go to one of three, northside no charge, General Practice Respiratory Clinic (GPRCs) located at:

- Ryde/North Ryde – 39 Delhi Rd, North Ryde
- Roseville – 132A Pacific Hwy, Roseville
- Dee Why – 5 Mooramba Rd, Dee Why

These GP led clinics are for people needing non-urgent care for cold or flu or other respiratory conditions and are appointment-based. Bookings for these three clinics are via HotDocs <https://bit.ly/3Qpty8D> Non-Medicare card holders can also attend these clinics at no charge.

To download a copy of the SNHN Winter Resilience flyer and checklist at [Make winter about you, not the flu](#)

**-ENDS-**

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[1] *Source: NSW Health, Infectious Diseases Data, Northern 2020-2022, NSW and NSLHD,*  
<https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/infectious/pages/data.aspx>

The main referrers to these services are health professionals from public and private hospitals in the Northern Sydney region.

**ABOUT: Sydney North Health Network** <https://sydneynorthhealthnetwork.org.au/>

The Northern Sydney Primary Health Network, operated by the Sydney North Health Network – a not-for-profit organisation – is one of 31 Primary Health Networks (PHNs) established by the Australian Government to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of medical services for the community. Our focus is on patients who are at risk of poor health outcomes. We work to improve the co-ordination of their care, so they receive the right care, in the right place, at the right time.