

25 November, 2019

## GET TESTED – LET’S ELIMINATE HIV TRANSMISSION

South Eastern Sydney Local Health District is encouraging people at risk who’ve never been tested for HIV or haven’t had a test for more than a year, to get one done.

Dr Josephine Lusk, Clinical Director, Short Street Sexual Health Centre, St George Hospital, said this HIV Awareness Week (23 - 30 November) in the lead up to World AIDS Day (1 December), is a good opportunity to take a test.

“HIV testing is simple and confidential. There are now a variety of HIV tests available including free tests,” Dr Lusk said.

“You can get tested at your local GP or sexual health service. Or, if you want to test yourself at home, the [Dried Blood Spot](#) testing kit can be delivered to you and results are sent back by text, email or phone.

“People at risk of HIV, particularly men who have sex with men, can now use a combination of prevention methods to reduce their risk including taking [HIV Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis](#) (PrEP) and using condoms.”

NSW has made significant progress towards the goal of virtually eliminating HIV transmission by 2020, with a 13 per cent drop in the number of new diagnoses in NSW between January to September, compared to the previous five year average.

NSW Chief Health Officer, Dr Kerry Chant said this reduction is due to more people seeking early testing and treatment and taking steps to prevent HIV transmission including the use of PrEP.

“A late HIV diagnosis can be life-threatening and increases the chances of passing on HIV to sexual partners. Early diagnosis means you can receive treatment, live a long, healthy life and prevent transmission to others,” Dr Chant said.

Between January to September 2019, 159 men who had sex with men were diagnosed with HIV in NSW. Of these men, 45 per cent had not had a test in the past 12 months and 18 per cent had never had an HIV test.

“With almost 40 per cent of these men diagnosed with HIV in the late stage of infection, we are urging those at risk to get a test,” Dr Chant said.

The NSW Government has committed \$22.4 million in 2019-20 to strengthen testing, treatment and prevention with 47 state-funded Sexual Health Clinics also making testing easily accessible.

For information on HIV testing, visit [www.health.nsw.gov.au/hiv-test](http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/hiv-test) or call [NSW Sexual Health Infolink](#) on 1800 451 624 (Free-call)