

Media Release



Health
South Eastern Sydney
Local Health District

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World AIDS Day, 1 December – promoting HIV testing to end HIV transmission

World AIDS Day is observed worldwide on 1 December each year. This year South Eastern Sydney Local Health District (SESLHD) will be joining hundreds of events taking place throughout NSW to mark World AIDS Day and promote awareness of HIV testing.

Dr Jo Lusk, Director, Short Street Sexual Health Centre, at St George Hospital said this year's World AIDS Day theme for NSW is 'Ending HIV', which focuses on the three key areas of Testing More, Treating Early and Prevention through safe sex.

"Preventing HIV is still as important as ever. Around 10,500 people in NSW are living with diagnosed HIV infection, but around 10 per cent of people with HIV in NSW may be unaware they are infected. We are committed to changing this statistic.

"To end HIV, more people need to get tested more often. The earlier people know their status, the better their outlook," Dr Lusk said.

Express clinics, rapid HIV testing, after hours and drop-in clinics, online appointment bookings, tests at GP clinics and faster and easier ways to get HIV test results are all part of a new era in HIV testing in NSW.

The most effective way for people to protect themselves and their partners in reducing the spread of HIV is to consistently use condoms with sex partners and have regular HIV and STI tests.

"Overall, during 2013 and 2014, HIV testing in NSW started to increase among high risk groups, with more new HIV infections being detected earlier. We need to continue to encourage people to use condoms and get tested regularly to help us to end HIV," Dr Lusk said.

HIV can affect people of all ages, genders, races and cultures. In addition to gay men, heterosexual people at risk of HIV should be tested, especially people from countries with high rates of HIV, or who have had unprotected sex with a person at high risk of HIV.

"Increasing HIV testing rates is vital, as many people who have not been tested recently do not know they are HIV positive, and are possibly transmitting HIV to others."

"Through the remarkable advances in testing and treatment and care and continued promotion of safe behaviour we now have the means to achieve the goal of considerably reducing HIV transmission," Dr Lusk said.

As part of World AIDS Day, Local Health Districts, community groups and not-for-profit organisations are holding events to increase community awareness about HIV and HIV testing.

SESLHD will be holding the following local events for World AIDS Day on Monday, 1 December in the St George and Sutherland region:

- **St George Hospital, Central Access Service, 2 South Street, Kogarah** - World AIDS Day stall - information on World AIDS Day, HIV transmission and HIV testing. World AIDS Day merchandise available. Stall open from 9.00am to 12.00pm.
- **St George Hospital, main entrance foyer** - World AIDS Day stall - information on World AIDS Day, HIV transmission and HIV testing. World AIDS Day merchandise available. Quiz, raffles and display panel of history of HIV/AIDS from the 1980s to now. Stall open from 9.00am to 12.00pm. World AIDS Day fundraiser BBQ - behind James Laws House from 11.00 am to 3.00 pm.
- **Sutherland Hospital atrium** - World AIDS Day stall - information on World AIDS Day, HIV transmission and HIV testing. World AIDS Day merchandise available. Stall open from 9.00am to 4.00pm.

For more information on HIV testing, treatment and prevention go to:

<http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/endinghiv> or call the NSW Sexual Health Infolink on 1800 451 624 or call the Short Street Centre on 9113 2742.

HIV testing is available from GPs, or click on the following link for other testing locations across NSW: www.health.nsw.gov.au/sexualhealth/Pages/sexual-health-clinics.aspx

About World AIDS Day: World AIDS Day, held annually on 1 December, is a day to raise awareness about the issues surrounding HIV and AIDS, for people to show their support for people living with HIV and to commemorate those who have lost their lives. Over twenty years ago, a small group of New York artists created a simple design which is now one of the most recognised symbols worldwide – the red ribbon. The World AIDS Day red ribbon is now worn to show support and solidarity for the millions of people living with HIV and AIDS.

For information on World AIDS Day visit: www.worldaidsday.org.au

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