

Tuesday, 30 May 2017

## When was your last HIV check?

HIV Testing Week is just around the corner (1 - 7 June) and the Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District (ISLHD) is encouraging everyone to *make time for a test*.

Illawarra Sexual Health Service Director, Clinical Associate Professor Katherine Brown said around 10 per cent of people with HIV in NSW may be unaware they have the virus, a statistic NSW Health hopes to change.

“As well as risking their own health, people with undiagnosed HIV infection are at risk of passing the virus on to others without knowing,” Clinical Associate Professor Brown said.

To make testing for HIV easier, the NSW Government has launched the Dried Blood Spot HIV test – a free, easy, private and accurate way to test for HIV at home.

“HIV testing is easier and faster than ever with high quality, safe and innovative HIV testing services such as rapid HIV testing and express clinics, offering faster results, after-hours and drop in clinics,” she said.

A number of events will be held across the District to raise awareness of sexual health, STI prevention and regular testing and include:

- The South Coast Writers Centre will hold a three hour workshop, ‘Spoken Medicine’ with slam poet Gabrielle Journey Jones, to explore poetry and prose around the theme of HIV AIDS and wellbeing. The creative writing workshop aims to provide tools for young writers who wrestle with how to write about the self and teach them to generate art that is both performative and transformative.
- The South Coast Writers Centre is also again holding a writing / multimedia competition, which is open to video blogs and song-writing (2 minute max) as well as poetry (40 lines max) and prose (750 words max) under the theme of ‘Challenge’. For more information on either of the Writers Centres events email: [director@southcoastwriters.org.au](mailto:director@southcoastwriters.org.au)
- The Phoenix Theatre in Wollongong will present a special cabaret performance, *Salon Rouge* on 3 June that aims to promote early testing and health in our community. Tickets are available through: [www.phoenixtheatre.net.au](http://www.phoenixtheatre.net.au)

In 2016, one third of people newly diagnosed with HIV were diagnosed with signs of late infection, which could have been avoided with earlier testing. Most (82 per cent)

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new HIV infections reported last year were in gay and homosexually-active men, with heterosexual people accounting for 15 per cent.

“All pregnant women should be tested irrespective of risk, as treatment during pregnancy is very effective in preventing infection from mother to child.

“During HIV Testing Week, we are encouraging people to help end HIV transmission by 2020 by getting tested,” Clinical Associate Professor Brown said.

People can request HIV testing at their GP or health service.

For information on Dry Blood Spot self-sampling test go to:

<https://www.hivtest.health.nsw.gov.au/>

To find out where to get tested go to:

[www.health.nsw.gov.au/sexualhealth/pages/sexual-health-clinics.aspx](http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/sexualhealth/pages/sexual-health-clinics.aspx)

For more information on HIV testing, treatment and prevention go to [www.health.nsw.gov.au/endinghiv/Pages/default.aspx](http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/endinghiv/Pages/default.aspx) or call the NSW Sexual Health Infolink 1800 451 624 [www.shil.nsw.gov.au](http://www.shil.nsw.gov.au) .

For more information on HIV data in NSW in 2016 go to:

<http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/endinghiv/Documents/q4-2016-annual-hiv-data-report.pdf>