

21 November 2017

HIV testing the key to ending transmission

The *NSW HIV Strategy 2016-2020* has set a goal of virtually eliminating HIV transmissions by 2020. To achieve this goal the strategy focusses on prevention, testing and treatment.

In the week leading up to *World AIDS Day* on December 1, health professionals are encouraging people at risk to be tested.

Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District (ISLHD) Sexual Health Service Director, Associate Professor Katherine Brown said testing is an important step in achieving “the virtual elimination” of HIV by 2020.

“It’s important for people to know that it’s never been easier to get tested. There’s now a mix of high quality, safe and innovative testing services available, with express and drop-in clinics offering faster results and after-hours service. Plus HIV testing is fast, free and confidential,” Associate Professor Brown said.

“Many new infections come from people who don’t know that they have HIV, which is why testing is so important,” she said.

Testing is available at a range of different health services:

- GPs
- Family planning clinics
- Aboriginal medical services
- Sexual health clinics – 1800 451 624
- Community-based rapid HIV testing sites

Alternatively, the Dried Blood Spot Test is a HIV test for people who may be concerned about privacy, or find it difficult to get to a clinic because of location or opening hours. Registering online at www.hivtest.health.nsw.gov.au, the testing kit is then sent to any address or postal box in a plain, express post envelope.

Treatment for people living with HIV has come a long way. With early treatment, most people are likely to have a near normal life expectancy and are unlikely to develop AIDS. HIV treatments now have minimal side effects and most people can take as little as one tablet a day.

As part of AIDS Awareness Week and World AIDS Day, a number of events and activities are being held throughout the Illawarra and Shoalhaven to encourage people to test for HIV more often and to increase community awareness about prevention of HIV and support for those living with HIV.

These include:

Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District

Media contact: Media and Corporate Communications Unit

Phone: 4221 6862 or 0477 391 219 | Afterhours: 0422 003 764 | website: www.islhd.health.nsw.gov.au

healthdirect AUSTRALIA – providing expert health advice 24 hours a day to NSW residents – Tel. 1800 022 222

Ordinary blokes on bikes ride again for HIV

The annual **World AIDS Day (WAD) South Coast Motorbike Ride** is being held again from **Thursday, 23 November**.

Now in its fifth year, a team of self-professed 'ordinary blokes on bikes' will again ride from Port Kembla to Bega to talk to the community about HIV and the importance of getting tested.

Port Kembla Hospital Security Officers, Dale Holland and Dave Candy, together with Geza Belley from the First Step Program and community member, Peter Schmidt will set off on their Harleys from Port Kembla and then visit Nowra, Batemans Bay and Bega, where information and resources will be provided to the community.

The promotional activity is facilitated by the ISLHD Healthy People Illawarra and HIV and Related Programs (HARP) Unit in partnership with Southern NSW Local Health District (SNSWLHD), Grand Pacific Health and Shoalhaven City Council.

WAD South Coast Motorbike Ride

Thursday, 23 November

- 10am, Jelly Bean Park, Nowra
- 12.30pm depart Nowra for Batemans Bay

Friday, 24 November

- 9am, Bay Central Pharmacy, Orient Street, Batemans Bay
- 1.30pm, Ayres Way, Bega

Community information session at Berkeley Neighbourhood Centre

Members of the community are invited to an afternoon tea being held on Friday, 1 December for World AIDS Day.

Hear from people living with HIV and their experiences; learn about tests and treatments and how to link to support services.

Community members and services: 12pm-2pm, Berkeley Neighbourhood Centre
Bookings: www.trybooking.com/SUEB

Services only: 3pm-5pm, The Orana Centre, Wollongong
Bookings: www.trybooking.com/SSYL

Book online or contact 4254 2700 and ask for Donna.

In the lead up to World AIDS Day visit www.health.nsw.gov.au/hiv-test to learn more about HIV testing and living with HIV.