Protect yourself and your loved ones from flu this winter

It’s that time of year again … flu season is approaching and Sunshine Coast residents are urged to help protect themselves and others by getting vaccinated.

Vaccination for influenza is particularly important for people who are at higher risk of developing severe complications from influenza.

These high-risk groups are eligible for free influenza vaccination from their G.P. from 20 April:

- All adults aged 65 years of age or older
- Pregnant women at any stage of pregnancy
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 15 years of age or older
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children aged six months up to five years of age
- Individuals six months of age or older with medical conditions predisposing them to severe influenza

Sunshine Coast Hospital and Health Service public health physician Dr Andrew Langley said that to 7 April this year 107 people in the Sunshine Coast, Gympie and Noosa council areas were notified to Queensland Health with influenza.

“This is almost twice the average for this time of year, and is only the people who get tested. A larger surge in cases will occur as we approach winter,” Dr Langley said.

“Type A influenza has been most common this year (79%). Most of these with subtyping available have been identified as influenza A (H3N2).

“Influenza A (H3N2) viruses were most common in the 2014-15 northern hemisphere winter. This subtype tends to be associated with increased risk of severe disease and complications.

“In total, approximately 800 people in the area are notified on average each year.”

Dr Langley said although vaccination was an important step to protect yourself from influenza, there were other measures residents could take to prevent the spread of flu.

He said the flu was spread easily from person-to-person through coughing, sneezing and direct contact with an infected person, or contaminated surfaces.
What should you do to prevent the flu?

- Have an influenza vaccination
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue every time you cough or sneeze
- Throw the used tissue in the bin
- Always wash your hands with soap after coughing or sneezing
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth
- Don’t share eating utensils, drinking glasses, towels or other personal items
- As much as possible, avoid close contact with people who are sick
- Stay home when you are sick


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