

Friday 4 November 2022

## NSW SIGNIFICANTLY EXPANDS ACCESS TO JE VACCINE

NSW has widened access to free Japanese encephalitis (JE) vaccine to a broader group of people from today, Friday 4 November.

JE vaccine is now recommended for people aged two months or older who live or routinely work in 39 [Local Government Areas](#) with identified JE risk in the west of NSW who:

- Spend significant time outdoors (four hours per day), for unavoidable work, recreation, education, or other essential activities, OR
- Are living in temporary or flood damaged accommodation (e.g. camps, tents, dwellings exposed to the external environment) that place them at increased risk of exposure to mosquitoes, OR
- Are engaged in the prolonged outdoor recovery efforts (clean up) of stagnant waters following floods

NSW Health and the NSW Department of Primary Industries are working closely together, with the support of local councils, to ensure a comprehensive response to JE, including vaccination, and mosquito surveillance and control. NSW Health is supporting local councils to undertake mosquito control and other surveillance activities.

Executive Director of Health Protection NSW, Dr Jeremy McAnulty said the key to protecting yourself from JE and other mosquito borne infections is avoiding mosquito bites. For those people who will be exposed to mosquito bites in affected areas, vaccination also helps protect against JE infection.

Dr McAnulty emphasised that supply of vaccine continues to be constrained in Australia, but that people most at risk should get vaccinated with the supply available in NSW.

“I encourage those people at highest risk because they spend a lot of time outdoors in affected areas to take advantage of the free access to the vaccine as soon as possible, particularly as it can take two weeks or more following vaccination to develop a protective immune response to the virus,” Dr McAnulty said.

NSW Health has placed orders for additional vaccines that are expected to arrive in the first part of 2023.

Dr Sarah Britton, Chief Veterinary Officer from the NSW Department of Primary Industries said, as well as people in the 39 LGAs, people who work in high-risk settings continue to be recommended vaccination regardless of where they live.

“Vaccination is also strongly recommended for people who live in any part of NSW and work, live at, or are visiting a piggery, including farm workers and their families, animal transport workers, vets and others involved in the care of pigs. This extends to pork abattoirs and pork rendering plants,” Dr Britton said.

JE vaccine is available through local General Practitioners (GPs). People who meet the eligibility criteria should make an appointment with their GP and let them know it is for the JE vaccine. Some GPs may require a few days’ notice so they can order the vaccine.

Last mosquito season, 13 people in NSW were clinically diagnosed with JE in NSW and two of those people sadly died. All were estimated to have acquired the virus between mid-January and the end of February 2022. Sentinel surveillance for JE in mosquitos has commenced for this mosquito season.

JE is a serious disease caused by the JE virus, however only around one per cent of people infected with the JE virus will experience symptoms.

JE is spread to humans by infected mosquitoes. People are not able to pass the virus to other people. Humans also cannot get infected with the virus by touching an infected animal or eating animal products, including pork products.

Australian mosquitoes can carry a range of viruses for which there are no vaccines, so it is vital to avoid mosquito bites.

Protect yourself and your family by:

- covering openings such as windows and doors with insect screens and checking there are no have gaps in them
- removing items that might collect water (such as old tyres, empty pots) outside your house where mosquitoes can breed
- improving drainage on your property so that water does not become stagnant
- wearing light, loose-fitting long-sleeved shirts, long pants and covered footwear and socks, especially around dusk and dawn
- applying repellent to all areas of exposed skin, using repellents that contain DEET, picaridin, or oil of lemon eucalyptus
- re-applying repellent regularly, particularly after swimming, being sure to always apply sunscreen first and then apply repellent
- using insecticide sprays, vapour dispensing units and mosquito coils to repel mosquitos (mosquito coils should only be used outside).

For further information on JE virus and ways to protect yourself visit: <https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/mosquitoes>