

Australia further expands access to Japanese encephalitis vaccine

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JE vaccine is available through local General Practitioners, Aboriginal health services and pharmacists

New South Wales (NSW) in Australia is further expanding free access to Japanese encephalitis (JE) vaccine to ensure residents living in high-risk regional areas are protected this mosquito season.

The change in eligibility criteria removes the need for people living in high-risk areas to spend at least four hours per day outdoors and clarifies other criteria to help people assess if they can access the free vaccine. This change in eligibility criteria is being made in NSW and Victoria.

In addition to the current group of people who work with pigs or mosquitoes or in specialised laboratories, Communicable Diseases Network Australia's (CDNA) national priority groups, and some international travellers, JE vaccine is now also recommended for people aged 2 months or older who live or routinely work in any of the high-risk local government areas.

JE vaccine is available through local General Practitioners (GPs), Aboriginal health services and pharmacists.

Keira Glasgow, NSW Health Director of One Health urged eligible community members to book in with their healthcare provider and get vaccinated against JE.

"Now is a great time to vaccinate, not just because we're in the midst of mosquito season but because the eligibility criteria are now expanded to include a much broader group within affected regional areas.

However, it's important the community continues to stay vigilant and take precautions against mosquito bites altogether because, aside from Japanese encephalitis, mosquitoes carry a range of viruses for which there are no vaccines", Glasgow said.