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Northern Beaches Hospital reveals Covid action plan, as it prepares for increasing number of cases

Northern Beaches Hospital's medical chief says they're ready for an increase in Covid patients coming through the doors, with 50 Intensive Care beds equipped with ventilators available.



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August 13, 2021 - 12:00AM

Manly Daily



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The Delta variant has changed everything, according to Northern Beaches Hospital's medical chief, who is preparing for an increasing number of Covid patients over the coming weeks.

The hospital's Medical Director Associate Professor Peter Thomas said he wanted to reassure the community that the hospital was ready for what may come.

He said they had 50 isolated intensive care beds equipped with ventilators for Covid patients, as well the potential for scalable Covid wards with a separate air supply to the rest of the hospital.

He said he was fully expecting an increase in patients as the [virus spreads](#) and urged people to get vaccinated as it was the only way out of the situation.



Associate Professor Peter Thomas, Medical Director at Northern Beaches Hospital. Picture: Supplied.

Premier Gladys Berejiklian said he was unvaccinated, but had “significant” underlying health conditions.

Dr Thomas said doctors were seeing younger, unvaccinated patients with the Delta variant.

He said the Frenchs Forest hospital had facilities to care for children with Covid and had already had seen young patients needing help to fight the virus come through their doors.

He said they can provide kids with a series of treatments and interventions including oxygen, although any child needing intubation would be transferred to the children’s hospital.

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“Everything has changed with the Delta variant,” Dr Thomas said.



Signage is seen at the Northern Beaches Hospital in Sydney. Picture: NCA NewsWire/Bianca De Marchi

“This disease has evolved and we have had to adapt as healthcare professionals.

“If you have underlying health conditions there are increased concerns, but we are seeing people that have no previous medical conditions who are also as affected by Covid-19.

“Young people and some children.”

He said compared with some of the hardest hit countries in other parts of the world, Australia has been lucky in that hospitals have had time to prepare for the current situation.

Dr Thomas said added to that the “hospital was well designed for a pandemic”, with multiple single isolation rooms compared with other hospitals.

“We have a scalable Covid plan which has been put in place throughout the last 18 months – when the virus first hit, at Christmas with the Avalon cluster and now,” he said.



Covid warnings at Northern Beaches Hospital in Sydney. Picture: NCA NewsWire/Bianca De Marchi

He said staff in the Emergency Department are wearing full Personal Protective Equipment and anyone suspected of having Covid or are a confirmed Covid case are taken straight to a respiratory assessment pod via a different entry to other patients to prevent exposure.

There is also a negative pressure operating theatre to allow surgeons to operate on a Covid patient if necessary.

The Covid testing clinic is also operational seven days a week between 8am and 5pm and is now a drive-through service.

“We changed to a drive-through service following feedback from patients and the community,” Dr Thomas said.

“We have been getting up to 400 patients a day coming through.”



Northern Beaches Hospital is preparing for more Covid patients in the coming weeks. Picture: NCA NewsWire/Bianca De Marchi

While the onsite medical centre is offering the AstraZeneca vaccine, the hospital hopes to also offer Pfizer when supplies come in.

He said 84 per cent of hospital staff are already vaccinated, with more in the process of getting vaccinated, to protect themselves and their families.

Dr Thomas said there wasn't an issue with vaccine hesitancy at the hospital because staff know the value of the vaccine for their own personal protection.



Northern Beaches Hospital, August, 2021. Picture: NCA NewsWire/Bianca De Marchi

He said the pandemic has meant there are added stresses for staff at this time, combined with the extra physical burden of wearing PPE, which is exhausting and uncomfortable, and dealing with the limitations of lockdown at home, like everyone else.

He said in terms of how the public can support staff, he said following the health orders and respecting the rules around visitation at the hospital was much appreciated.

He also praised the community for their thoughtful comments and support via social media which he said was also a “morale booster”.

However, he emphasised the best way to support staff and the hospital was to get the vaccine.

“The key message on the beaches is to get vaccinated as soon as possible,” he said.

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