

# Influenza Monthly Epidemiology Report, NSW

January 2014

This report describes the surveillance for influenza and other respiratory pathogens, undertaken by NSW Health to date. This includes data from a range of surveillance systems.

For weekly communicable disease surveillance updates refer to the Communicable Disease Weekly Report at <http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/publichealth/infectious/index.asp>.

## Summary

### In January 2014:

- [Emergency Department surveillance](#) - the rate of influenza-like illness (ILI) presentations to selected emergency departments was low and within the normal range expected for January.
- [Laboratory surveillance](#) – laboratory data indicated an increase in influenza activity. Influenza A(H1N1)pdm09, influenza A(H3N2), and influenza B were all circulating at low levels.
- [Deaths with pneumonia or influenza reported on the death certificate](#) – The population death rate for influenza and pneumonia was below the epidemic threshold for the month of January.
- [National and International influenza surveillance](#) – Surge in new cases of infection with the novel avian influenza A(H7N9) strain from China; otherwise moderate to high influenza activity worldwide.
- [Recommended composition of 2014 Australian influenza vaccines](#) – The Australian Influenza Vaccine Committee (AIVC) has provided recommendations for the 2014 southern hemisphere winter influenza season.

### About this report:

Health Protection NSW collects and analyses surveillance data on influenza and related respiratory pathogens, and produces regular surveillance reports for the community and health professionals. Surveillance reports are produced weekly commencing in May and continuing until the end of the influenza season. Monthly reports are produced throughout the rest of the year.

The influenza surveillance reports include data from a range of surveillance systems and sources concerned with Emergency Department illness surveillance, laboratory (virological) surveillance, and community illness surveillance. Pneumonia and influenza mortality data are also monitored and reported upon periodically. For further information see the [NSW Health Influenza website](#).

# 1. Emergency Department (ED) Surveillance

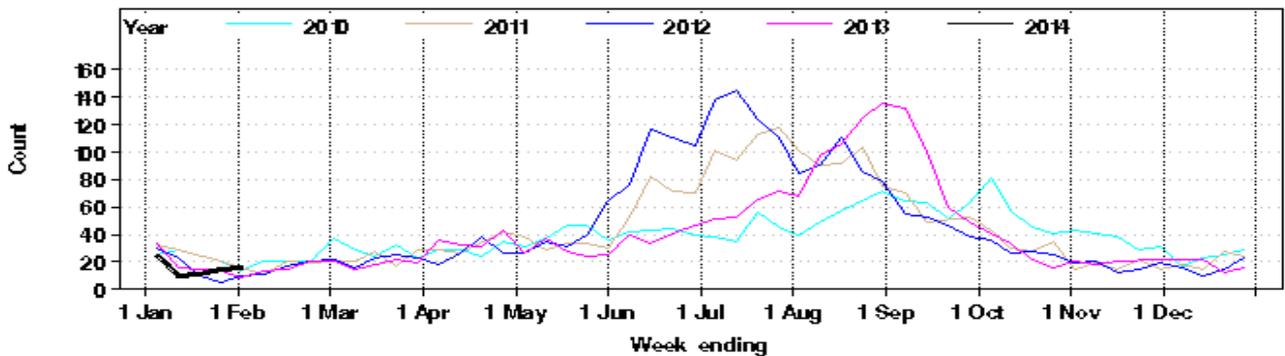
**Source:** NSW Health Public Health Real-time Emergency Department Surveillance System (PHREDSS) managed by the Centre for Epidemiology and Evidence, NSW Ministry of Health. Data from 59 NSW emergency departments (ED) are included. Comparisons are made with data for the preceding five years. Recent counts are subject to change.

## Presentations for influenza-like illness (ILI) and other respiratory illness

The ED surveillance system uses a statistic called the ‘index of increase’ to indicate when presentations are increasing at a statistically significant rate. It accumulates the difference between the previous day’s count of presentations and the average for that weekday over the previous 12 months. An index of increase value of 15 is considered an important signal for the start of the influenza season in NSW as it suggests influenza is circulating widely in the community.

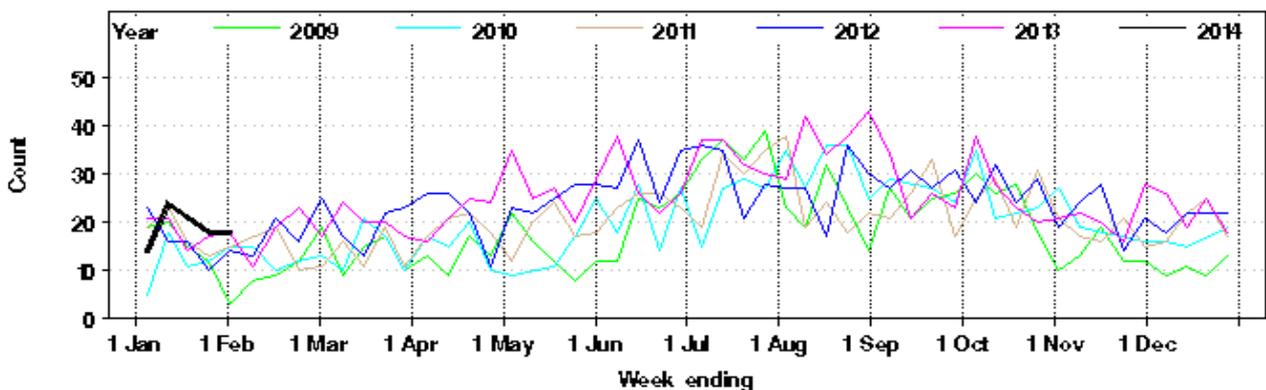
- On 2 February 2014 the index of increase for ILI presentations was 1.5, consistent with the usual low levels of activity at this time of year.
- In January there were few ILI presentations (82; rate 0.4 per 1000 presentations), consistent with the historical average and similar to the previous month (Figure 1).
- Admissions from ED to critical care units for ILI and pneumonia were elevated overall. There was a sharp increase in presentations during the first two weeks of January which was above the usual range for this time of year (Figure 2).
- Total presentations for bronchiolitis were within the usual range for this time of year (Figure 3).

**Figure 1:** Total weekly counts of ED visits for influenza-like illness, from January – 2 February 2014 (black line), compared with the 4 previous years (coloured lines).

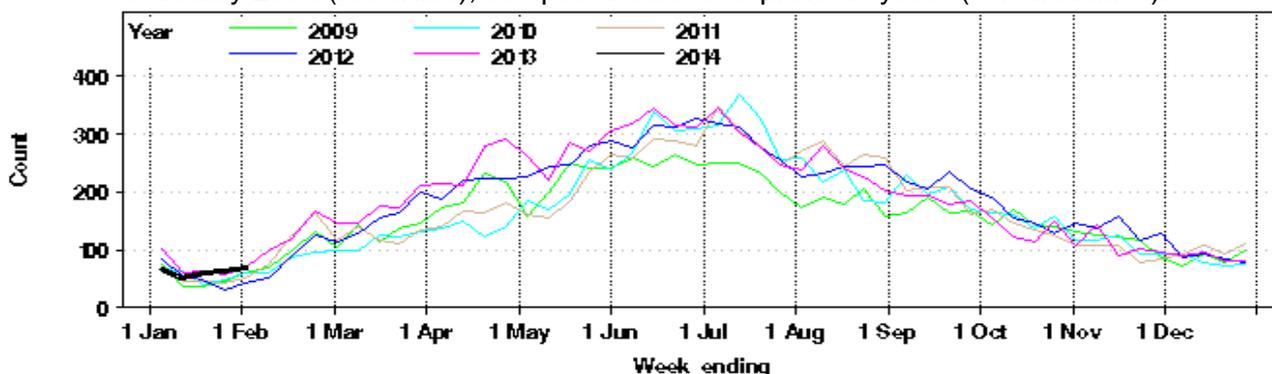


\* **Note:** Excludes 2009 data to enable comparison of 2014 data with data from previous non-pandemic years.

**Figure 2:** Total weekly counts of ED visits for pneumonia and ILI admitted to a critical care ward, from January – February 2014 (black line), compared with the 5 previous years (coloured lines).



**Figure 3:** Total weekly counts of Emergency Department visits for bronchiolitis, from January – February 2014 (black line), compared with the 5 previous years (coloured lines).



## 2. Laboratory Surveillance

In January 2014:

- 3541 tests for respiratory viruses were performed at sentinel NSW laboratories (Table 1).
- 162 specimens tested positive for influenza A – 35 of these tested positive for A(H3N2), and 28 tested positive for influenza A(H1N1)pdm09. The remainder (99) were not typed (Table 1, Figure 4).
- 23 cases of influenza B were reported (Table 1, Figure 4).
- the total number of positive influenza tests in January was higher than the previous month and considerably higher than that for the same month in 2013.

Laboratory testing indicates that influenza has increased over the month of January. Influenza A(H3N2), influenza A(H1N1)pdm09, and influenza B are all circulating at similar levels. Rhinoviruses are the leading respiratory viruses identified by laboratories, and this is usual for this time of year.

**Table 1:** Summary of tests and results for influenza and other respiratory viruses at NSW laboratories, 1 January to 2 February 2014.

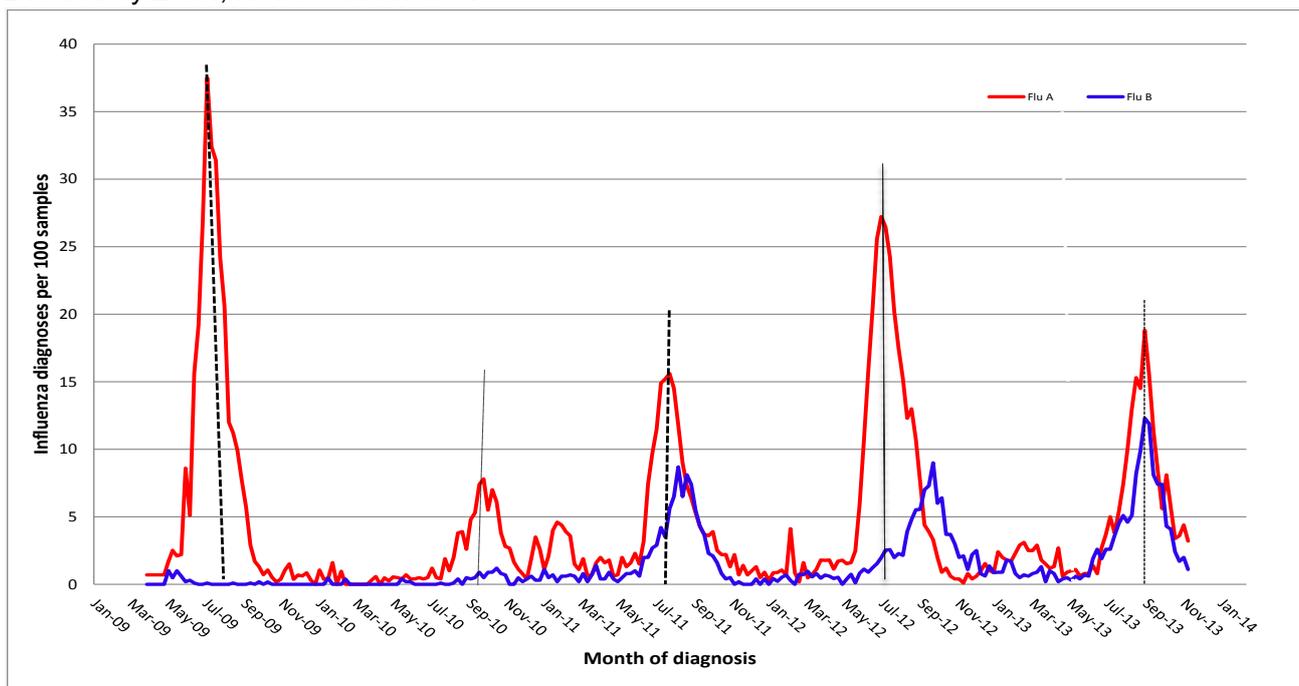
Month ending	Total Tests	TEST RESULTS *															
		Influenza A						Influenza B		Adeno	Parainf 1, 2 & 3	RSV	Rhino	Entero	HMPV		
		Total	H3N2 **	H1N1 pdm09	A (Not typed)		Total										
Total	(%)	Total	(%A) **	Total	(%A)	Total	(%A)	Total	(%)								
02/02/2014*	3541	162	(4.6%)	35	(21.6%)	28	(17.3%)	99	(61.1%)	23	(0.6%)	98	123	90	339	12	32
<b>Week ending</b>																	
05/01/2014	861	15	(2.3%)	3	(20.0%)	3	(20.0%)	9	(60.0%)	3	(0.5%)	18	30	20	76	2	9
12/01/2014	795	39	(4.9%)	11	(28.2%)	4	(10.3%)	24	(61.5%)	6	(0.8%)	32	41	17	89	2	12
19/01/2014	756	40	(5.3%)	7	(17.5%)	9	(22.5%)	24	(60.0%)	5	(0.7%)	8	25	15	55	2	5
26/01/2014	884	31	(4.5%)	7	(22.6%)	9	(29.0%)	15	(48.4%)	7	(1.0%)	20	14	19	63	5	2
02/02/2014	645	37	(5.7%)	7	(18.9%)	3	(8.1%)	27	(73.0%)	2	(0.3%)	20	13	19	56	1	4

**Note** Five week reporting period used for the month.

\* All samples are tested for influenza viruses. Not all samples are tested for all of the other viruses listed.

\*\* Samples that test negative for A(H1N1)pdm09 are assumed to be A(H3N2).

**Figure 4:** Percent of respiratory samples positive for influenza A or influenza B, 1 January 2009 – 2 February 2014, New South Wales.



**Source:** Participating sentinel laboratories include the following: South Eastern Area Laboratory Services, The Children’s Hospital at Westmead, Sydney South West Pathology Service, Pacific Laboratory Medicine Service, Royal Prince Alfred Hospital, Hunter Area Pathology Service, Pathology West – Westmead & Pathology West - Nepean Nepean [no data from Oct 2010 to June 2011], Douglas Hanley Moir Pathology, VDRLab [data from 5 March 2010], Laverty Pathology [data from 1 April 2010 to February 2011], SydPath (St Vincent’s) Pathology [data from Nov 2010], Medlab, and Laverty [data from September 2013].

### Laboratory-confirmed Influenza outbreaks in residential care facilities

Two outbreaks of influenza A in aged care facilities were reported this month (Table 2). The first outbreak was in a facility in the Murrumbidgee Local Health District (LHD) which has affected over 20 residents and staff. The second outbreak was in a facility in the Hunter New England LHD which has affected 18 residents and staff. Four residents required hospitalisation and there were five deaths in residents linked to these outbreaks.

**Table 2.** Reported influenza outbreaks in NSW institutions, 2006 to January, 2014.

Year	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014*
No. of outbreaks	2	25	9	1	2	4	39	12	2

\* **Note** Year to date.

Reports of influenza outbreaks in aged care facilities were uncommon from 2009 to 2011. This is thought to be as a result of the higher levels of sero-protection observed in people in older age-groups against the influenza A(H1N1)pdm09 strain which predominated in these years.

Influenza outbreak reports increased dramatically in 2012 when the influenza A(H3N2) strain predominated. Both strains of influenza A and an influenza B strain circulated during 2013.

### 3. Deaths with pneumonia or influenza reported on the death certificate

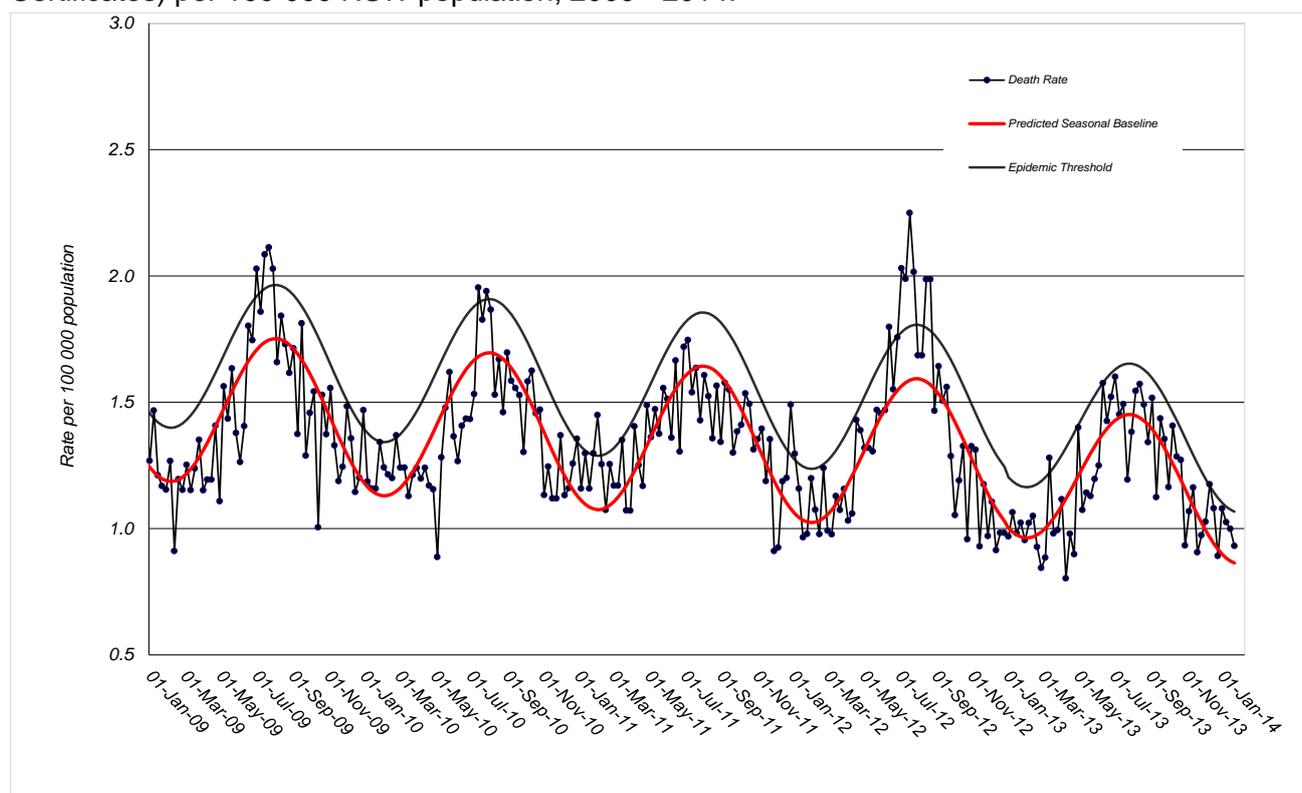
Deaths registration data is routinely reviewed for deaths attributed to pneumonia or influenza. While pneumonia has many causes, a well-known indicator of seasonal and pandemic influenza activity is an increase in the number of death certificates that mention pneumonia or influenza as a cause of

death. The predicted seasonal baseline estimates the predicted rate of influenza or pneumonia deaths in the absence of influenza epidemics. If deaths exceed the epidemic threshold, then it may be an indication that influenza is beginning to circulate widely.

For the week ending 24 January:

- There were 0.93 pneumonia or influenza deaths per 100 000 NSW population, which is below the epidemic threshold of 1.07 per 100 000 population (Figure 5).
- Up to 24 January, out of 3240 deaths there were three death certificates mentioning influenza, and 297 mentioning pneumonia. Of the deaths mentioning influenza all were in elderly people.

**Figure 5:** Rate of deaths classified as influenza and pneumonia (by NSW Registered Death Certificates) per 100 000 NSW population, 2009 - 2014.



**Source:** NSW Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages.

**\* Notes on interpreting death data:**

- (1) The number of deaths mentioning “Pneumonia or influenza” is reported as a rate per 100,000 NSW population. Using the NSW population provides a more stable and reliable denominator than deaths from all causes. This is because pneumonia and influenza are known to contribute to increases in deaths from non-respiratory illnesses, such as deaths due to ischaemic heart disease. As the number of these deaths will increase with rises in influenza activity, the actual effect of influenza on mortality rates will be obscured if all-cause mortality is used as the denominator. This limitation is avoided by using the NSW population, which is relatively constant throughout the year, as the denominator.
- (2) Deaths referred to a coroner during the reporting period may not be available for analysis. Deaths in younger people may be more likely to require a coronial inquest. Therefore influenza-related deaths in younger people may be under-represented in these data.
- (3) The interval between death and death data availability is usually at least 7 days, and so these data are one week behind reports from emergency departments and laboratories. In addition, previous weekly rates may also change due to longer delays in reporting some deaths.

## 4. National and International Influenza Surveillance

### National Influenza Surveillance

Although national influenza surveillance reports are not produced at this time of year, many jurisdictions are reporting increased influenza activity. Total national reports of laboratory-confirmed influenza in January were high, and almost double the number reported in January 2013.

For further information on the National Notifiable Disease Surveillance System, which includes laboratory-confirmed influenza reports, see: <http://www9.health.gov.au/cda/source/cda-index.cfm> .

### Avian influenza A(H7N9) in China

China has now reported 291 cases of human infection with avian influenza A(H7N9), including 64 deaths. A total of 155 cases have come in the second outbreak wave which began in October 2013, with more cases reported in January 2014 than in any previous month.

So far, there is no evidence of sustained human-to-human transmission and most cases are linked to exposure to poultry and live poultry markets. The disease is mild in poultry so outbreaks remain difficult to detect.

The Chinese government has reported that it continues to take the strong surveillance and control measures, including:

- strengthening surveillance and situation analysis;
- reinforcing case management and treatment;
- conducting risk communication with the public and release information;
- strengthening international collaboration and communication; and
- conducting scientific studies

### Influenza activity worldwide

The World Health Organization (WHO) summary global influenza activity weeks 3 and 4 notes the following:

- In North America influenza activity remained high in recent weeks with A(H1N1)pdm09 predominant.
- In Europe, a slight increase in influenza activity has been observed, which may indicate the start of the influenza season.
- In China influenza activity continued to increase with influenza (H1N1)pdm09, A(H3N2) and influenza B co-circulating.
- In countries of tropical areas variable influenza activity was reported.

FluNet laboratory reporting during weeks 1 to 2 (29 December 2013 to 11 January 2014) noted:

- Of the 81 261 respiratory specimens tested, 24 494 (30.1%) were positive for influenza viruses.
- Of these, 91.6% were typed as influenza A and 8.4% as influenza B.
- Of the sub-typed influenza A viruses, 80.5% were influenza A(H1N1)pdm09 and 19.5% were influenza A(H3N2).
- Of the characterized B viruses, 84% belonged to the B-Yamagata lineage and 16% to the B-Victoria lineage.

For further information see the full WHO report at: [WHO influenza update No203](#).

## Useful influenza surveillance links

- Follow the link for the [Australian Influenza Surveillance Reports](#) which provide the latest information on national influenza activity.
- Follow the link for the [World Health Organization Global Influenza Programme](#).
- Follow the link for Australia's [WHO Collaborating Centre for Reference and Research on Influenza](#), part of an international network of centres analysing influenza viruses currently circulating in the human population in different countries around the world. The centre also provides information on the [current vaccine recommendations](#) for influenza.

## 5. Recommended composition of 2014 Australian influenza vaccines

The [Australian Influenza Vaccine Committee](#) (AIVC) met on 10 October 2013 to recommend influenza viruses to be used in the composition of the influenza vaccines for 2014. The committee recommended that the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) should adopt the September WHO recommendations. The trivalent influenza vaccine components for the Australian 2014 influenza season should contain the following:

- A (H1N1): an A/California/7/2009 (H1N1) - like virus, 15 µg HA per dose
- A (H3N2): an A/Texas/50/2012 (H3N2) - like virus, 15 µg HA per dose
- B: a B/Massachusetts/2/2012 - like virus, 15 µg HA per dose

Quadrivalent vaccines should contain viruses listed above, plus the additional B virus:

- B/Brisbane/60/2008-like virus, 15 µg HA per dose.

The TGA has accepted the recommendations of the AIVC.

The launch of the 2014 Influenza vaccination campaign under the National Immunisation Programme is planned for the middle of March 2014.