

# Communicable Diseases Weekly Report

## Week 33 10 August - 16 August 2015

In summary, we report:

- **Pertussis (Whooping Cough)** – increasing trend in notifications
- **Influenza vaccination** – update on influenza vaccines for children less than 5 years
- **Summary of notifiable conditions activity in NSW**

For further information on infectious diseases and alerts see the [Infectious Diseases](#) webpage.

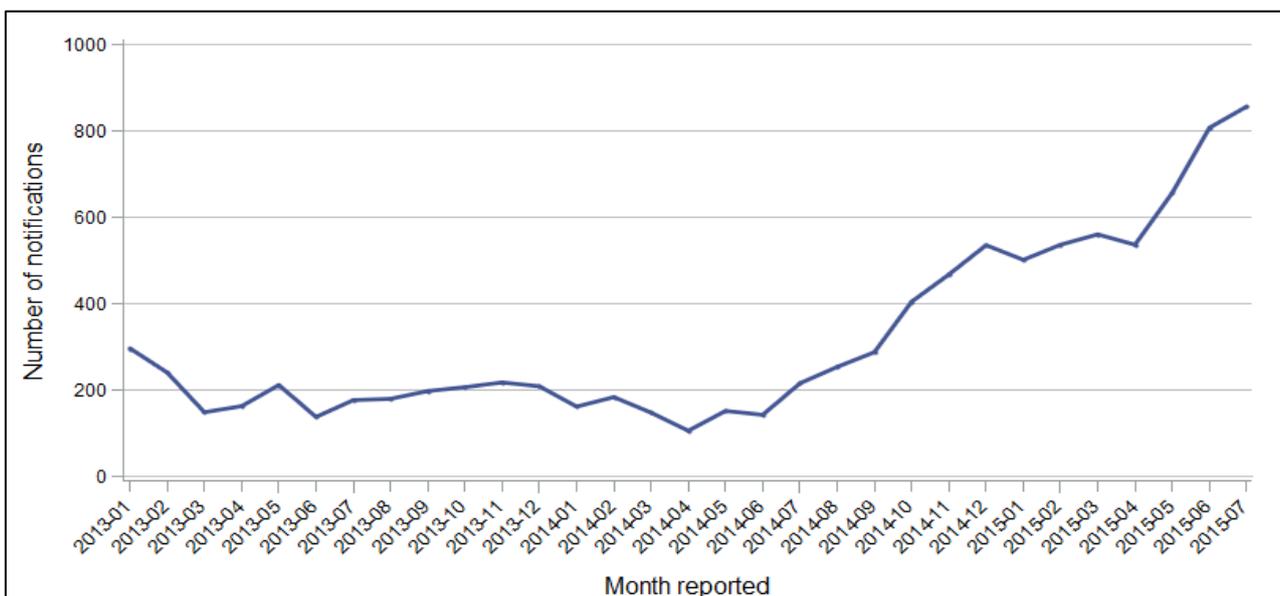
Follow the [A to Z of Infectious Diseases](#) link for more information on specific diseases.

For links to other surveillance reports, including reports on Influenza, HIV/STIs and foodborne disease, see the [NSW Health Infectious Diseases Reports](#) webpage.

### **Pertussis (Whooping Cough)**

Pertussis (whooping cough) notifications in NSW continue to increase, a trend which began towards the middle of 2014 (Figure 1). In this reporting week there were 257 confirmed cases reported, up from 239 in the previous week. In comparison, there were 54 cases reported during the equivalent week last year. Pertussis can be particularly serious in young children. This week there were six cases reported in children less than 12 months of age.

**Figure 1: Pertussis notifications January 2013 to July 2015**



Pertussis, also known as ‘whooping cough’, is a highly contagious bacterial infection affecting the respiratory system which is caused by the bacterium *Bordetella pertussis*. It affects individuals of all ages but is more severe (and can be fatal) in small babies, particularly those too young to be vaccinated or those who are unvaccinated. Elderly people are also at increased risk of developing complications from pertussis.

Pertussis is a vaccine preventable disease, and is notifiable in NSW. Vaccination against pertussis is recommended for children at 6-8 weeks, 4 and 6 months of age, with a booster at 18 months of age, 4 years of age and in the first year of high school. Boosters are important due to progressive waning of immunity with increasing time since the last dose. Currently the dose at 18 months of age is not funded under the National Immunisation Program; however the Australian Government has indicated that the 18 month dose will likely be funded from October 2015.

The NSW Antenatal Pertussis Vaccination Program commenced on 1 April 2015, offering free diphtheria, tetanus and pertussis (dTpa – Boostrix®) vaccine to all pregnant women in the third trimester of pregnancy, preferably at 28 weeks gestation. As there is placental transfer of maternal pertussis antibody to the foetus, infants acquire protective immunity that protects them during the period before they are old enough to be vaccinated at six weeks of age. Boostrix® vaccine is provided free to general practices, Aboriginal Medical Services and antenatal clinics for all pregnant women in the third trimester.

Follow the link for more information about pertussis [patient management for GPs](#).

Follow the link for more information regarding the [Antenatal Pertussis Vaccination Program](#).

Follow the link for more information regarding [pertussis notifications](#).

[Back to top](#)

## **Influenza vaccination – influenza vaccines for children less than 5 years**

A range of influenza vaccines are approved for use in Australia but care is required when choosing appropriate vaccines for young children.

**One brand of influenza vaccine, bioCSL Fluvax®, is not registered by the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) for use in children less than 5 years of age and must not be given to this age-group.**

Other brands have been approved for use in children less than 5 years of age and these must be used in this age-group. These vaccines, which can be given from 6 months of age, include two other vaccines included in the National Immunisation Program: Vaxigrip® and Fluarix®.

The Australian Health Department has recently reported that at least 33 doses of Fluvax® have been given to children less than 5 years of age this year. Thankfully there have been no reports of adverse effects related to these incidents. In NSW there have been seven doses of Fluvax® administered to children less than five years of age. While this a marked reduction compared to the previous year (when there were 14 doses administered inappropriately), these incidents remain a continuing concern.

NSW Health has established a range of strategies to reduce the risk of vaccine providers incorrectly administering Fluvax® to children less than 5 years of age. These include:

- An annual communication strategy to ensure that all vaccine providers are aware of the on-going restriction against administering Fluvax® to children less than 5 years of age.
- Alerts on the NSW Health online vaccine ordering system for providers. When a provider commences an influenza vaccine order, an alert appears in red which warns against Fluvax® administration to children less than 5 years.

- Warning flyers with every delivery of influenza vaccine from the NSW State Vaccine Centre (SVC) under the National Immunisation Program. The flyer is designed with a large STOP sign and also carries instructions on how to prepare a paediatric dose of Vaxigrip® or Fluarix®.
- Warnings on the NSW Health immunisation website.
- Preferential distribution by the SVC of Fluvax® to vaccine providers where children are not present, such as aged care residential facilities.
- A protocol to ensure that Fluvax® supplied by the SVC is always distributed together with alternative influenza vaccines that are suitable for children less than 5 years.
- Prompt investigation of all reports of Fluvax® on the Australian Childhood Immunisation Register (ACIR) recorded as having been administered to a child less than 5 years of age. Local public health units provide advice to vaccine providers on the age restrictions, and on proper vaccine storage and handling to ensure that Fluvax® is correctly stored and labelled within the provider's vaccine fridge.
- An enhanced incident investigation form to better investigate predictors of incorrect Fluvax® administration.

Follow the links for further information in the [Clinical advice for immunisation providers regarding the administration of 2015 seasonal influenza vaccines](#) from the Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (ATAGI) and the [Seasonal influenza vaccination 2015](#) advice from NSW Health.

[Back to top](#)

## Summary of notifiable conditions activity in NSW

The following table summarises notifiable conditions activity over the reporting period (Table 1).

**Table 1. NSW Notifiable conditions from 10 August to 16 August 2015, by date received.\***

		Weekly		Year to date			Full Year	
		This week	Last week	2015	2014	2013	2014	2013
Enteric Diseases	Cryptosporidiosis	6	2	655	290	981	429	1132
	Giardiasis	43	44	2328	1991	1576	2942	2242
	Hepatitis E	1	0	9	29	13	38	16
	Rotavirus	19	17	263	333	276	714	508
	Salmonellosis	41	48	2859	3029	2436	4302	3483
	Shigellosis	8	5	116	147	80	209	136
Respiratory Diseases	Influenza	1928	1507	9684	12112	3620	20888	8403
	Tuberculosis	4	2	244	289	273	472	443
Sexually Transmissible Infections	Chlamydia	326	348	14112	15250	13942	22897	21089
	Gonorrhoea	84	67	3293	3150	2871	4876	4265
	LGV	1	0	15	11	24	14	29
Vaccine Preventable Diseases	Adverse Event Following Immunisation	2	2	120	194	418	256	509
	Meningococcal Disease	2	0	29	20	27	37	48
	Pertussis	257	246	5089	1347	1526	3051	2379
	Pneumococcal Disease (Invasive)	18	12	293	315	333	511	490
Vector Borne Diseases	Barmah Forest	3	3	156	130	316	163	438
	Chikungunya	1	0	27	15	16	27	22
	Dengue	4	4	216	306	209	378	303
	Malaria	2	0	27	68	64	87	93
	Ross River	15	12	1424	415	387	677	512
Zoonotic	Q fever	1	2	132	122	106	190	163

**\* Notes on Table 1: NSW Notifiable Conditions activity**

- Data cells represent the number of case reports received by NSW Public Health Units and recorded on the NSW Notifiable Conditions Information Management System (NCIMS) in the relevant period.
- Data cells in the 'Adverse Event Following Immunisation' category refer to suspected cases only. These reports are referred to the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) for assessment. Data on adverse events following immunisation is available online from the TGA [Database of Adverse Event Notifications](#).
- Only conditions for which at least one case report was received appear in the table. HIV and other blood-borne virus case reports are not included here but are available from the [Infectious Diseases Data](#) webpage.

[Back to top](#)