

Communicable Diseases Weekly Report

Week 20, 10 May to 16 May 2020

In summary, we report:

- [Legionnaire's disease](#) – Media release and summary of cases year to date
- [Novel coronavirus 2019 \(COVID-19\)](#)
- [Summary of notifiable conditions activity in NSW](#)

For further information see NSW Health [infectious diseases page](#). This includes links to other NSW Health [infectious disease surveillance reports](#) and a [diseases data page](#) for a range of notifiable infectious diseases.

Legionnaires' disease

NSW Health has issued a [media release](#) reminding business of their obligation to ensure cooling towers are well maintained, particularly as COVID-19 restrictions are eased and buildings re-open for business.

Cooling towers are a known source for *Legionella pneumophila*, a type of bacteria which causes Legionnaires' disease. A second type of Legionella bacteria, *Legionella longbeachae* can also cause Legionnaires' disease, but is more commonly associated with soil and potting mix.

Compared to the year to date in 2019, there has been a 36% decrease in the number of cases caused by *L. longbeachae* (21 in 2020 compared to 33 in 2019) and a 34% increase in cases caused by *L. pneumophila* (51 cases in 2020 compared to 38 in 2019). There has been no change in the overall number of Legionnaire's disease cases notified for the year to date.

When a case of Legionnaire's disease is notified in NSW, public health officers work closely with the case and their family to investigate the potential source. Where a cooling tower is identified as a potential source, NSW Health works with local councils to examine and, where required remediate, the tower to reduce ongoing risk.

Symptoms of Legionnaire's disease include fever, chills, a cough, and shortness of breath and may lead to severe chest infections such as pneumonia. Early symptoms of Legionnaires' disease can be similar to symptoms of COVID-19, so it is important to seek advice as soon as possible.

A person's symptoms can develop up to 10 days from the time the person is exposed to contaminated water or soil particles in the air. People who develop this disease are diagnosed by chest X-ray and a urine test and usually require antibiotic treatment in hospital.

In 2018, NSW Health strengthened the Public Health Regulation to reduce the community's risk of Legionnaires' disease, requiring building owners to comply with Australian Standard 3666, conduct monthly tests on cooling towers and to notify high levels of Legionella and other bacteria to local councils.

To reduce the risk of Legionnaire's disease due to *L. longbeachae*, appropriate personal protective equipment (masks and gloves) should always be used when handling soil, including bagged potting mix and products from landscape supply companies.

Further information

- [NSW Health Legionnaires' disease fact sheet](#)
- [NSW Health Legionellosis notification data page.](#)
- [NSW Health information regarding the regulatory control of Legionnaires' disease](#)

Novel coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19)

For up-to-date information regarding the COVID-19 outbreak and the NSW response, please visit the [NSW Health COVID-19 page](#).

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 May – 16 May 2020, by date received*

		Weekly		Year to date			Full Year	
		This week	Last week	2020	2019	2018	2019	2018
Enteric Diseases	Cryptosporidiosis	10	6	373	375	394	669	708
	Giardiasis	20	27	929	1700	1271	3271	2937
	Rotavirus	3	7	320	262	378	1756	808
	STEC/VTEC	1	0	41	29	24	80	57
	Salmonellosis	60	43	1742	1843	1673	3563	3336
	Typhoid	1	1	33	36	29	63	58
Respiratory Diseases	Influenza	17	17	7240	13690	4085	116446	17409
	Legionellosis	7	5	72	71	67	154	171
	Tuberculosis	9	9	205	214	186	594	506
Sexually Transmissible Infection	Chlamydia	397	351	11046	12507	12487	32448	31178
	Gonorrhoea	160	118	4063	4643	4144	11710	10606
	LGV	1	0	33	20	34	69	85
Vaccine Preventable Diseases	Mumps	1	0	38	22	35	56	72
	Pertussis	17	22	1262	2404	1520	6386	6280
	Pneumococcal Disease (Invasive)	2	3	138	153	137	692	681
Vector Borne Diseases	Barmah Forest	10	11	78	31	38	63	74
	Ross River	164	225	967	316	239	578	571
Zoonotic Diseases	Psittacosis	2	1	9	3	4	10	7
	Q fever	5	3	81	123	72	248	228

* Notes on Table 1: NSW Notifiable Conditions activity

- Only conditions which had one or more case reports received during the reporting week appear in the table.
- Due to the rapidly evolving nature of the situation, data on COVID-19 notifications can be found separately on the NSW Health [Latest Updates on COVID-19](#) page.
- 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 (i.e. by report date).
- Note that [notifiable disease data](#) available on the NSW Health website are reported by onset date so case totals are likely to vary from those shown here.
- Cases involving interstate residents are not included.
- The shigellosis case definition changed on 1 July 2018 to include probable cases (PCR positive only), hence case counts cannot be validly compared to previous years.
- 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](#).
- Chronic blood-borne virus conditions (such as HIV, hepatitis B and C) are not included here. Related data are available from the [Infectious Diseases Data](#), the [HIV Surveillance Data Reports](#) and the [Hepatitis B and C Strategies Data Reports](#) webpages.
- Notification is dependent on a diagnosis being made by a doctor, hospital or laboratory. Changes in awareness and testing patterns influence the proportion of patients with a particular infection that is diagnosed and notified over time, especially if the infection causes non-specific symptoms.