

Communicable Diseases Weekly Report

Week 5, 31 January to 06 February 2021

In summary, we report:

- [Legionnaires' disease](#) – increase in cases in Greater Sydney
- [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

Four cases of Legionnaires' disease were notified in this reporting week ([Table 1](#)); two caused by *Legionella pneumophila*, and two caused by *Legionella longbeachae*.

Between 1 December 2020 and 6 February 2021, 30 cases of Legionnaires' disease caused by *L. pneumophila* have been notified to NSW Health. This is above the expected number of cases for this period. Several cases have been notified in the Northern Sydney, Illawarra Shoalhaven, South Western Sydney, and Western Sydney Local Health Districts.

There is generally an increase in cases towards the end of summer, when the weather and use of air conditioning systems start to change. NSW Health has issued a [media release](#) prompting cooling tower owners to ensure cooling towers are properly maintained and advising people to be alert for symptoms.

NSW Health and the local Public Health Units routinely undertake environmental investigations in areas visited by cases during their exposure periods. To date no clear source of *Legionella* has been found. NSW Health continues to actively monitor for any further cases and investigate potential sources.

Legionnaires' disease is an infection of the respiratory system, and usually causes fever, chills, cough and shortness of breath. Some people also have muscle aches, headache, tiredness, loss of appetite and diarrhoea. Legionnaires' disease can result in severe pneumonia and usually affects people over the age of 50, especially those who smoke and those with existing lung conditions or suppressed immune systems.

Legionnaires' disease is not spread from person to person. *Legionella* bacteria are present in the environment, and infection may occur after breathing in contaminated water vapour or dust. There are two types of *Legionella* bacteria that commonly cause Legionnaires' disease: *L. pneumophila* and *L. longbeachae*. *L. pneumophila* may be found in building water systems, such as air-conditioning cooling towers and warm water systems, and has been associated with spas, showerheads and other aerosol-producing devices. *L. longbeachae* may contaminate soil, including bagged potting mix and landscaping products.

Reducing risk of Legionnaires' disease:

Certain activities such as gardening, irrigation, and re-commissioning of spas or large air-conditioning systems may increase the risk of *Legionella* bacteria exposure.

The risk of Legionnaires' disease can be reduced by:

- Businesses ensuring water cooling towers are well maintained, particularly after periods of decommission, in line with NSW Public Health Regulations.
- Regular maintenance, including disinfection of spas, hot tubs and irrigation systems – particularly those sourced from stagnant water such as dams or reservoirs.
- Taking appropriate precautions when gardening and handling soil, potting mix and similar products, including:
 - Wet down products while working to reduce dust
 - Use appropriate personal protective equipment including mask and gloves
 - Wash hands after handling soil and potting mix and before eating, drinking, or smoking.

Further information:

- [NSW Health Legionnaires' disease fact sheet](#)
- [NSW Health Legionellosis notification data page](#)

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 31 January – 6 February 2021, by date received*

		Weekly		Year to date			Full Year	
		This week	Last week	2021	2020	2019	2020	2019
Enteric Diseases	Cryptosporidiosis	11	8	70	84	86	550	669
	Giardiasis	41	32	163	242	369	1791	3271
	Rotavirus	1	2	19	194	83	463	1755
	Salmonellosis	68	88	535	423	521	2888	3556
	Shigellosis	1	0	6	156	91	494	867
Respiratory Diseases	Influenza	2	2	13	2516	2254	7478	116444
	Legionellosis	4	6	29	12	25	168	153
	Tuberculosis	8	7	52	37	41	608	590
Sexually Transmissible Infections	Chlamydia	655	490	3031	3021	2910	27222	32437
	Gonorrhoea	198	141	956	1158	1111	9909	11702
	LGV	1	1	2	11	6	44	69
Vaccine Preventable Diseases	Mumps	1	0	2	8	7	53	57
	Pertussis	5	0	8	400	807	1405	6386
	Pneumococcal Disease (Invasive)	7	4	32	51	37	361	691
Vector Borne Diseases	Barmah Forest	5	2	15	8	7	271	63
	Ross River	21	15	94	18	46	1986	592
Zoonotic Diseases	Leptospirosis	2	0	3	2	0	12	9
	Psittacosis	1	0	2	0	1	29	11

* 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.