

# NSW Health Influenza Surveillance Report

Week 21 Ending 26 May 2013

## Influenza Surveillance Forecast:

NSW experienced moderate influenza activity last winter, with the greatest impact in older age-groups largely due to the re-emergence of the influenza A(H3N2) strain. This strain co-circulated with A(H1N1)pdm09 and B strains. The impact of seasonal influenza in NSW this year is expected to be less than in 2012 given that:

- the influenza strains likely to predominate in NSW this year also circulated last season (so many people will have acquired immunity)
- the 2013 influenza vaccine is better matched to these strains than the 2102 vaccine, and
- the uptake of influenza vaccine in NSW this year has been higher than in recent years.

It is important to note, however, that as the influenza A(H3N2) strain is expected to circulate again this year, people in older age-groups will again be at higher risk of infection compared to the years when A(H1N1)pdm09 was the main influenza A strain circulating.

## Summary:

**For the week ending 26 May 2013, influenza activity was low in NSW with no indication that the influenza season has started.**

- [Emergency Department surveillance](#) – the rate of influenza-like illness (ILI) presentations was low and within the usual range for this time of year. Bronchiolitis activity was steady this week.
- [Laboratory surveillance](#) – testing data indicated overall influenza activity was low. Rhinovirus was the most common respiratory virus identified by sentinel laboratories.
- [Community illness surveillance](#) – data collected from ASPREN and FluTracking.net indicated low ILI activity in NSW.
- [National and International influenza surveillance](#) – there is a decreasing trend in reports from China of human cases of infection with the novel avian influenza A(H7N9) strain.

## 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 reports 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 on influenza see the [NSW Health Influenza website](#).

# 1. Emergency Department (ED) Surveillance

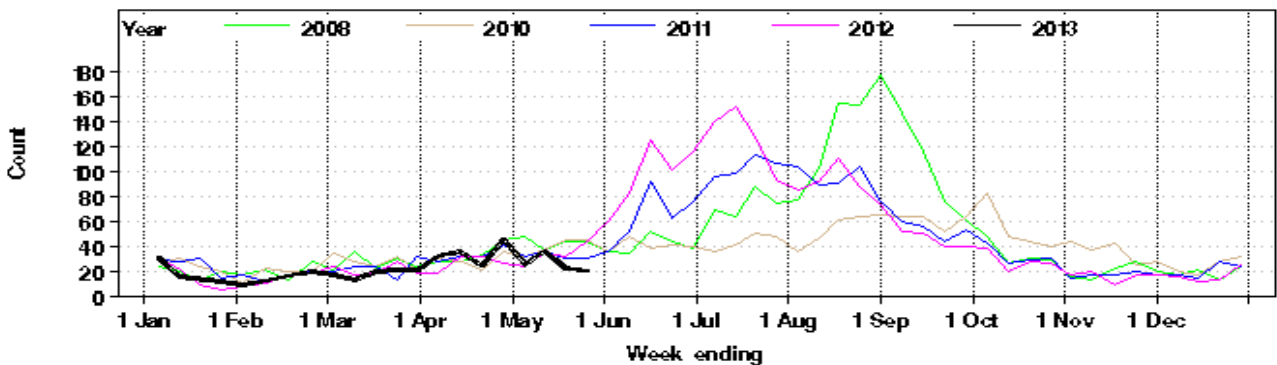
**Source:** NSW Health Public Health Real-time Emergency Department Surveillance System (PHREDSS) managed by the Centre for Epidemiology and Evidence, NSW Ministry of Health. Data from 59 NSW emergency departments (ED) are included. Comparisons are made with data for the preceding five years. Recent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

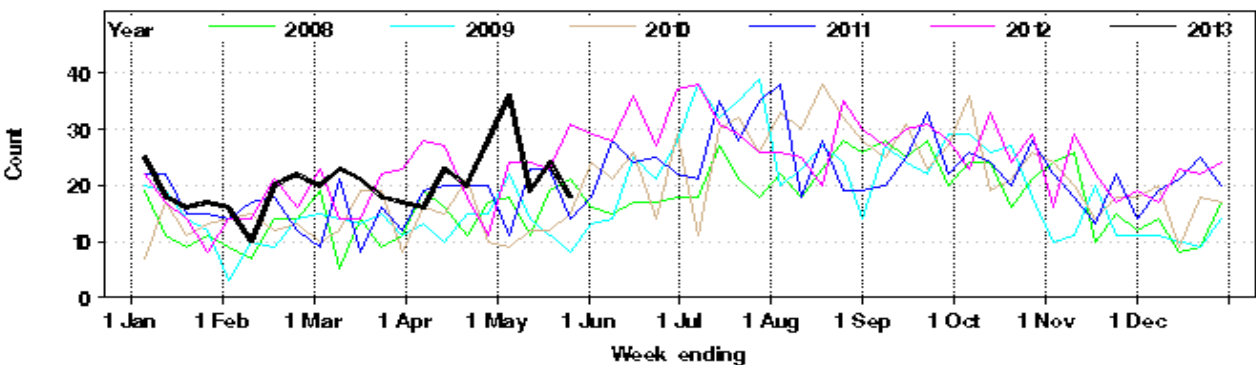
- On 26 May 2013, the index of increase for influenza-like illness presentations was 5.6, well below the threshold of 15 and suggested that the influenza season had not commenced in NSW.
- The rate of ILI presentations was similar to last week’s rate 0.7 cases per 1000 presentations and was well below the usual range for this time of year (Figure 1 and Table 1).
- ILI and pneumonia admissions to critical care wards decreased this week and were within the usual range for this time of year (Figure 2 and Table 1).
- The number of children presenting with bronchiolitis was similar to number reported last week and was at the upper end of the usual range for this time of year (Figure 3 and Table 1).

**Figure 1:** Total weekly counts of ED visits for influenza-like illness, from January – 26 May 2013 (black line), compared with each of the 5 previous years (coloured lines).\*

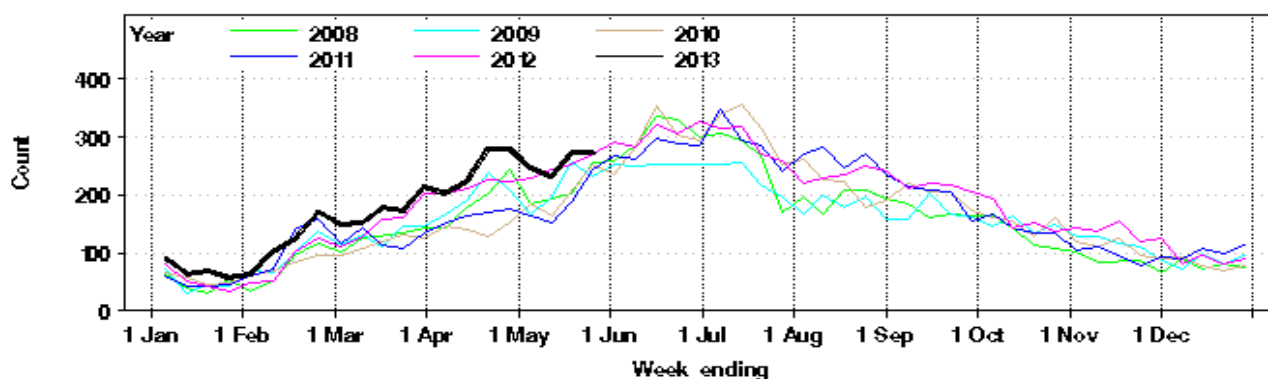


\* **Note:** Excludes 2009 data to enable comparison of 2013 data with data from previous non-pandemic years.

**Figure 2:** Total weekly counts of ED visits for pneumonia and ILI admitted to a critical care ward, from January – 26 May 2013 (black line), compared with each of the 5 previous years (coloured lines).



**Figure 3:** Total weekly counts of ED visits for bronchiolitis, from January – 26 May 2013 (black line), compared with each of the 5 previous years (coloured lines).



**Table 1:** Weekly ED and Ambulance Respiratory Activity Summary. Includes data from 59 NSW EDs and the Sydney Ambulance Division. \*

Data source	Diagnosis or problem category	Trend since last week	Overall comparison with usual range for time of year	Statistically significant age groups (if any)	Statistically significant local increase (if any)	Action other than this report (if any)	Comment
ED presentations, 59 NSW hospitals	Influenza like illness (ILI)	Decreased	Below				
	Pneumonia	Increased	Below				
	Pneumonia and ILI admissions	Increased	Usual				
	Pneumonia and ILI critical care admissions	Decreased	Usual				
	Bronchiolitis	Steady	Above				Critical care ward admissions across the state increased (9 versus 2 usually).
	Respiratory, fever and unspecified infections	Increased	Usual				
	Asthma	Decreased	Usual				
	Total presentations	Decreased	Below				2.4% lower than 2012.
Ambulance calls, Sydney region	Breathing problems	Increased	Usual				

\* **Notes on Table 1:** Statistically significant increases are shown in bold. Recent activity counts are subject to change. This is a routine general report for information on respiratory activity and is additional to public health situation reports that advise of unusual increases in activity in particular provisional ED diagnosis groupings or Ambulance problem categories.

## 2. Laboratory Surveillance

For the week ending 26 May 2013, the number and proportion of respiratory specimens reported by NSW sentinel laboratories which tested positive for influenza were low (Table 2 and Figure 4). Rhinovirus was the most common respiratory virus identified by NSW sentinel laboratories.

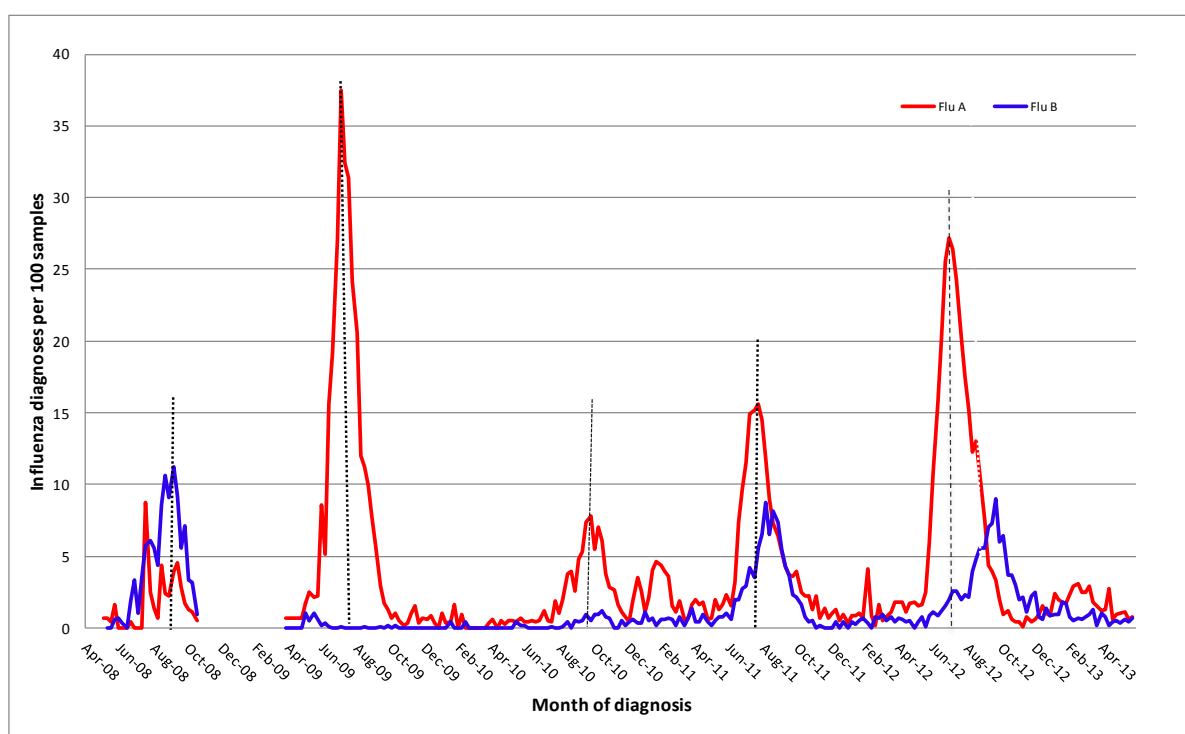
A total of 1020 tests for respiratory viruses were reported with only 13 specimens (1.3%) testing positive for influenza viruses. Influenza A(H3N2), influenza A(H1N1)pdm09 and influenza B strains were all detected.

**Table 2:** Summary of testing for influenza and other respiratory viruses at NSW laboratories, 1 January to 26 May 2013. \*

Month ending	Total Tests	Influenza A		A(H3N2)		A(H1N1)pdm09		Influenza B		Adeno.	Parainf. 1, 2 & 3	RSV	Rhino.	Entero.	HMPV***
		Total	(%)	Total	(% Flu A) **	Total	(% Flu A) **	Total	(%)						
01/02/2013*	2199	44	(2.0%)	13	(29.5%)	14	(31.8%)	26	(1.2%)	68	87	81	328	37	59
01/03/2013	2263	60	(2.7%)	17	(28.3%)	20	(33.3%)	15	(0.7%)	55	41	119	452	29	31
29/03/2013	2595	47	(1.8%)	9	(19.1%)	12	(25.5%)	21	(0.8%)	82	59	333	488	53	33
26/04/2013	3165	39	(1.2%)	13	(33.3%)	11	(28.2%)	10	(0.3%)	92	188	599	586	61	54
Week ending															
05/05/2013	863	8	(0.9%)	3	(37.5%)	4	(50.0%)	2	(0.2%)	23	15	176	133	12	13
12/05/2013	929	9	(1.0%)	5	(55.6%)	2	(22.2%)	5	(0.5%)	19	29	117	147	6	18
19/05/2013	954	5	(0.5%)	3	(60.0%)	1	(20.0%)	3	(0.3%)	28	18	143	168	7	8
24/05/2013	1020	7	(0.7%)	1	(14.3%)	3	(42.9%)	6	(0.6%)	18	24	141	158	11	8

\*\* Subset of influenza A positive tests. Not all influenza A samples are typed; samples that test negative for A(H1N1)pdm09 are assumed to be A(H3N2). \*\*\* HMPV = Human metapneumovirus

**Figure 4:** Percent of respiratory samples positive for influenza A or influenza B, 1 January 2008 – 26 May 2013, New South Wales. \*



**Note:** Laboratory surveillance data is provided by laboratories on a weekly basis and includes point-of-care tests as of 10 August 2012. Serological diagnoses are not included.

**Source:** Participating sentinel laboratories include the following: South Eastern Area Laboratory Services, Institute of Clinical Pathology and Medical Research, The Children’s Hospital at Westmead, Sydney South West Pathology Service, Pacific Laboratory Medicine Service, Royal Prince Alfred Hospital, Hunter Area Pathology Service, Nepean Hospital Pathology [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] and SydPath (St Vincent’s) Pathology [data since Nov 2010].

### 3. Community Illness Surveillance

#### The Australian Sentinel Practices Research Network (ASPREN)

ASPREN is a network of sentinel general practitioners (GPs) run through the RACGP and University of Adelaide that has collected de-identified information on influenza like illness and other conditions seen in general practice since 1991. GP's participating in the program report on the proportion of patients presenting with an ILI. The number of GP's participating on a weekly basis may vary.

- For the week ending 26 May, there were 23 ASPREN reports received from NSW GP's. The overall consultation rate for ILI was low at 4.0 per 1000 consultations, consistent with inter-seasonal reporting.

For further information please see the [ASPREN](#) website.

#### FluTracking.net

FluTracking.net is an online health surveillance system to detect epidemics of influenza. FluTracking is a project of the University of Newcastle, the Hunter New England Local Health District and the Hunter Medical Research Institute. It involves participants from around Australia completing a simple online weekly survey which is used to generate data on the rate of ILI symptoms in communities.

- For the week ending 26 May, FluTracking received reports for 4278 people in NSW. Fever and cough was reported by only 2.3% of respondents, with 1.2% of respondents reporting fever, cough and absence from normal duties.
- Low levels of influenza-like illness activity were also reported from all other states and territories.

For further information please see the [FluTracking](#) website.

### 4. National and International Influenza Surveillance

#### Avian influenza A(H7N9) in China

Only three new laboratory-confirmed cases of human infection with avian influenza A(H7N9) have been reported to WHO in May, with the onset of the most recent case being 21 May. However, four additional deaths have been reported from previously laboratory-confirmed cases.

To date, WHO has been informed of a total of 132 laboratory-confirmed cases, including 37 deaths.

#### Influenza activity worldwide

In summary, WHO has reported:

- Influenza activity in the northern hemisphere temperate zones decreased to low levels with some continued transmission in some areas including Canada and Egypt.
- In the tropical areas, influenza activity varied but was similar to previous weeks. Madagascar reported to be in an epidemic since the beginning of April.
- Influenza activity in the southern hemisphere was low with a slight increase in South Africa.
- A summary review of influenza activity in the northern hemisphere influenza season will be published in the World Epidemiological Report on 31 May 2013.

For further information please go to [WHO influenza update N°186](#).

## 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.