

Communicable Diseases Weekly Report

Week 50, 9 December to 15 December 2018

In summary, we report:

- [International travel and health risks](#) – update and advice on travel-related disease risks
- [Salmonellosis](#) – Increasing notifications in summer
- [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.

International travel and health risks

Many people will be preparing to travel overseas during the school holidays. It is important to remember that there are measures to take before you travel overseas, like vaccinations, and actions to take while travelling to reduce your risk of serious infectious diseases.

See a doctor before you leave

People intending to travel overseas, particularly those travelling to developing countries or who have health concerns, should make an appointment to see their general practitioner or travel doctor well before the departure date.

This gives an opportunity to discuss general health and allows enough time to have vaccinations related to the trip, including boosters for routine vaccinations and special vaccinations for particular destinations, and for [malaria](#) prophylaxis to be commenced if recommended.

Pack a travel health kit

Remember to take a travel kit appropriate for your destination and intended activities, which may include sunscreen, alcohol-based hand sanitiser, first aid supplies, insect repellent, and condoms.

Avoid food-borne and water-borne diseases

Common infections acquired by travellers include those that follow ingestion of contaminated food, water or other drinks particularly in developing countries.

Some of these cause relatively mild traveller's diarrhoea but serious infections like [hepatitis A](#) and [typhoid fever](#) are also acquired this way. Vaccines against [hepatitis A](#), [typhoid](#) and [cholera](#) are available but these don't cancel the need for food safety precautions.

In 2017 there were 54 notifications of typhoid infection in NSW residents, mostly acquired in south Asian countries (India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh) but also countries in south-east Asia and the Pacific.

Prevent mosquito bites

Mosquito-borne infections, such as [malaria](#), [dengue](#), and [Zika virus](#), are important causes of fever in Australian travellers returning from areas where these infections are prevalent. [Yellow fever](#) occurs in parts of Africa and in Central and South America, while Japanese encephalitis is a risk in many rural areas of Asia.

Make sure you regularly use and re-apply an effective insect repellent containing DEET or Picaridin if you are travelling to any regions where these infections occur.

In 2017 there were 266 notifications of dengue infection in NSW residents after international travel. While India, Indonesia and Thailand were the three most commonly reported countries linked to dengue infection, there were at least 21 other countries implicated.

Zika virus can also cause harm to the developing foetus in some women infected during pregnancy. All pregnant women are advised to not travel to areas with active Zika virus transmission. The Australian Department of Health maintains a list of current [Zika virus affected countries](#) and has further travel advice.

Make sure your vaccinations are up to date

Vaccine-preventable infections such as [influenza](#), [meningococcal disease](#), [measles](#), [mumps](#), [varicella \(chickenpox\)](#) and even [polio](#) are a risk for travellers and can be prevented through routine vaccinations.

Measles outbreaks are ongoing in Thailand and the Philippines, and anyone up to 52 years of age who hasn't had two documented doses of measles vaccine, is encouraged to get vaccinated before leaving Australia.

People heading to Papua New Guinea are reminded of the [ongoing polio outbreak](#) – a full course of polio vaccine and a recent booster is essential for all age groups.

Don't touch the animals

Travellers should be particularly aware of the risk [rabies](#) exposure in many parts of the world, including popular tourist destinations in Indonesia (including Bali), in Malaysia (including Sarawak) and in Thailand.

Rabies can be spread to travellers through the bites or scratches from rabid dogs, cats, monkeys and other land-based mammals in many countries.

In 2017 there were 467 people in NSW who had the series of four rabies vaccine injections required after being exposed to potentially infected animals while travelling overseas.

Travellers should avoid contact with all wild and domestic animals (especially dogs, cats, bats and monkeys), and take precautions to avoid being bitten or scratched, even if previously vaccinated. Seek urgent medical care if bitten by a dog or other animal while travelling.

See the [Rabies information for travellers](#) factsheet for more information.

Avoid sexually transmitted infections

Practice safer sex including using condoms to reduce the risk of catching sexually transmitted infections (STIs) such as HIV, hepatitis B, and gonorrhoea, as well as diarrhoeal infections like shigellosis.

STIs may be more common in some overseas countries than in Australia.

Learn about the disease risks at your destination

There are several websites with reliable up-to-date information on risks to health in the countries you are planning to visit:

- The [Australian Department of Health](#) website has a range of important information for Australian travellers, including information on [Zika virus](#) and [yellow fever](#), including current yellow fever vaccination requirements.
- The Australian Immunisation Handbook provides specific advice on [vaccination for international travellers](#).
- The Australian Government [Smartraveller](#) website has general information on health as well as areas where travel may be dangerous. This site also allows you to register your trip in case of an emergency while you are overseas.
- The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) [travel website](#) has country-specific and disease-specific advice for travellers as well as for health professionals.

Further information on safe travel and travel precautions is available from the NSW Health factsheets [Staying healthy when travelling overseas](#) and [Mosquitoes are a health hazard](#).

For more information of specific infections see the [NSW Health Communicable Disease fact sheets](#) website.

Salmonellosis

There have been 72 notifications of salmonellosis this reporting week (Table 1). Salmonellosis notifications have been increasing as the weather in NSW has become warmer.

Salmonella notifications usually begin to climb steeply in December each year and peak over summer. This is because *Salmonella* bacteria thrive in warmer weather and can produce an infective dose in contaminated food in a shorter time. Products containing undercooked eggs and improper separation of foods while cooking are the most common source of outbreaks of salmonellosis in NSW.

Restaurants, cafes, bakeries, caterers and manufacturers that make raw egg dressings, desserts and sauces need to follow safe handling practices. They should try to use alternatives to raw eggs in foods which are not subsequently cooked. Alternatives include commercially produced dressings and sauces, or pasteurised egg products.

At home, people can reduce their risk of *Salmonella* poisoning by following the NSW Food Authority's [four food safety tips](#).

Salmonellosis is a form of gastroenteritis caused by *Salmonella* bacteria, which are commonly found in animals. Symptoms of salmonellosis include fever, headache, diarrhoea, abdominal pain, nausea, and vomiting. Symptoms usually start around six to 72 hours after eating food contaminated with the organism. Symptoms typically last four to seven days, but can continue for much longer. Occasionally hospitalisation is required for management of dehydration, particularly in young babies, elderly people and those with weakened immune systems.

Follow the link for further information on [safe handling of raw egg products](#) from the NSW Food Authority.

Follow the link for the [salmonellosis factsheet](#).

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 9 December – 15 December 2018, by date received*

		Weekly		Year to date			Full Year	
		This week	Last week	2018	2017	2016	2017	2016
Bloodborne Diseases	Hepatitis C - Newly Acquired	1	1	29	36	25	36	25
Enteric Diseases	Cryptosporidiosis	11	15	692	1249	1119	1266	1187
	Giardiasis	50	33	2599	3056	3399	3133	3493
	Hepatitis A	2	1	84	66	38	71	41
	Listeriosis	1	0	19	20	34	20	36
	Rotavirus	14	20	788	2286	709	2319	750
	STEC/VTEC	2	2	57	49	62	53	65
	Salmonellosis	72	68	3189	3578	4401	3681	4536
	Shigellosis	14	16	507	227	299	235	310
Respiratory Diseases	Influenza	208	242	16969	103684	35336	103852	35541
	Legionellosis	3	3	162	133	125	138	134
	Tuberculosis	7	11	496	521	503	542	531
Sexually Transmissible Infections	Chlamydia	565	501	30197	28138	25351	29006	26024
	Gonorrhoea	169	191	10283	8854	6793	9161	7004
	LGV	1	2	82	49	59	50	60
Vaccine Preventable Diseases	Diphtheria	1	0	4	0	0	0	0
	Meningococcal Disease	1	3	70	90	68	91	71
	Mumps	1	1	69	123	63	127	67
	Pertussis	264	273	5965	5246	10658	5366	10978
	Pneumococcal Disease (Invasive)	20	12	668	672	538	683	545
Vector Borne Diseases	Barmah Forest	1	1	73	125	37	127	40
	Dengue	3	5	281	297	474	306	486
	Ross River	1	11	555	1640	529	1652	599

* 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 (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.
- 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 chronic blood-borne virus case reports are not included here but are available from the [Infectious Diseases Data](#) webpage.