

Communicable Diseases Weekly Report

Week 17, 21 April to 27 April 2019

In summary, we report:

- [Influenza](#) – activity continues to be higher than expected for the time of year. Winter Flu Campaign launch– time to get vaccinated
- [Measles](#) – one new case reported
- [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.

Influenza

There were 478 laboratory-confirmed influenza cases reported in this reporting week ([Table 1](#)) as the high inter-seasonal activity noted over summer has continued through autumn. Influenza A strains have accounted for over 90% of notifications.

For the year to date there have been 10,121 confirmed influenza notifications reported (by date of report), much higher than for the same periods in 2018 (3,803) and in 2017(2884).

It remains impossible to predict how the higher than usual influenza activity in recent months will affect this year's winter influenza season. However, the current influenza activity reinforces the importance of annual flu shots as was highlighted this week in the [NSW Winter Flu Campaign launch](#).

The 2019 campaign will employ a range of creative resources supported by interactive social media techniques to raise public awareness about personal measures to reduce the spread of flu and strongly encourage more people to be vaccinated, particularly those people at greater risk of severe flu. This will be supported by resources distributed through general practices, hospitals and aged care facilities.

Annual flu shots remain the best protection against influenza so the campaign will again promote vaccination against influenza among our most vulnerable groups, including the elderly and, since 2018 under a NSW government initiative, including all young children aged six months to less than five years of age who will be provided free influenza vaccine.

Under the National Immunisation Program, those eligible for a free flu shot include people aged 65 years and over, pregnant women, all Aboriginal people over 6 months of age, and those who suffer from chronic medical conditions.

Annual vaccination is the most important measure for preventing influenza and its complications and we encourage everyone to get vaccinated. It can save the life of the person receiving the vaccine, but importantly it also helps protect those who are unable to be vaccinated, such as very young babies and others who cannot be vaccinated due to health reasons.

An enhanced influenza vaccine is available for people aged 65 years and over, which has been shown to trigger a stronger immune response in this age group.

Influenza is a highly contagious respiratory illness caused by influenza viruses. There are two main types of influenza virus that cause infection in humans - types A and B - and many sub-types or strains. Influenza can occur throughout the year but activity usually peaks in winter.

Further information

- [Influenza factsheet](#)
- [Influenza resources for residential care facilities](#)
- [Influenza vaccination under the national immunisation program](#)
- [NSW under 5s flu vaccine program](#)
- [Influenza notifications data](#)
- [NSW influenza surveillance reports](#)
- [NSW Health influenza homepage](#) – with a range of additional influenza resources.

Measles

One new case of measles was notified in the reporting week (Table 1). This case was in a young man who lives in metropolitan Sydney who was diagnosed in Western Australia a few days after travelling there. He was not infectious while in NSW nor whilst travelling. The local public health unit has not identified any direct links to other recent cases but it is most likely that the man was exposed to the virus in central Sydney.

Measles is a serious viral illness and one of the most highly communicable infectious diseases. The measles virus is usually spread through coughing or by contact with the nasal or throat secretions of an infected person.

The symptoms of measles usually start 7 to 18 days after exposure to someone who has measles. They include fever, cough, runny nose, conjunctivitis (red, watery eyes) and feeling unwell. After three to five days a rash with flat red spots breaks out, usually starting on the face before spreading to the rest of the body. People are usually infectious from around four days before the onset of the rash until four days after it appears.

People are considered immune to measles if they have had a documented measles illness in the past or have evidence of having received two doses of a measles-containing vaccine. People born before 1966 are also considered immune as they are highly likely to have had measles infection as a child.

While one dose of vaccine induces effective protection in 95% of people, two doses are recommended as this provides long-term protection in 99% of people.

People who think they might have measles should avoid public places and see a doctor, but should call ahead to ensure they do not come in to contact with other people in the waiting areas.

Further information

- NSW Health [measles website](#) and [measles factsheet](#).
- [The Australian Immunisation Handbook](#) for more information on measles vaccine recommendations.

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 21 April – 27 April 2019, by date received*

		Weekly		Year to date			Full Year	
		This week	Last week	2019	2018	2017	2018	2017
Enteric Diseases	Cryptosporidiosis	1	11	334	361	861	708	1266
	Giardiasis	37	54	1243	1092	1347	2799	3135
	Hepatitis A	2	1	32	45	10	86	71
	Hepatitis E	2	1	7	5	8	18	20
	Rotavirus	6	12	193	328	214	808	2319
	STEC/TEC	2	1	27	23	21	57	53
	Salmonellosis	46	62	1577	1468	1832	3343	3681
	Shigellosis	10	12	280	75	69	532	236
Respiratory Diseases	Influenza	478	695	10121	3803	2884	17422	103852
	Tuberculosis	5	8	173	164	160	510	542
Sexually Transmissible Infections	Chlamydia	307	540	10392	10535	10093	31197	29006
	Gonorrhoea	146	201	3864	3512	3320	10622	9160
Vaccine Preventable Diseases	Measles	1	1	32	6	25	18	32
	Mumps	1	1	19	33	49	72	127
	Pertussis	60	83	2011	1264	2095	6281	5366
	Pneumococcal Disease (Invasive)	2	19	129	110	108	686	683
Vector Borne Diseases	Dengue	4	6	137	112	118	299	306
	Ross River	2	14	230	172	1108	570	1652
Zoonotic Diseases	Q fever	4	2	102	67	80	227	210

* 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.
- 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](#) and the [HIV Surveillance Data Reports](#) webpages.