

# Hunter New England and Central Coast Public Health Units

## Communicable Diseases Report

### February 2018

Listeriosis outbreak linked to rockmelons – advice for GPs  
New influenza vaccines for the elderly this winter  
Meningococcal ACWY vaccine planned for 12 month old infants  
Tetanus still causing morbidity and mortality

**Listeriosis:** Each year there are an average of 27 listeriosis cases reported in NSW with a case fatality rate of 16-19%. So far in 2018 there have been 14 cases identified, affecting mainly immunocompromised or pregnant people. Six confirmed cases in NSW have been linked to rockmelons from a grower in Nericon. The NSW Food Authority have removed rockmelons from this supplier from the foodchain. Anyone with rockmelons previously purchased should discard them. Listeriosis should be considered in anyone who is at risk and has eaten rockmelons presenting with flulike symptoms, fever, chills, muscle aches, nausea and sometime diarrhoea. [Listeriosis factsheet](#) is available with information on symptoms, risk factors, diet and food safety.

**Influenza:** Influenza A and B strains are circulating at higher levels than usual for this time of year (see Table 1.) although presentations to emergency departments are low. Countries in the Northern Hemisphere have reported an increase in influenza activity with travel connections likely to explain the current situation in Australia. Note that the composition of the [2018 Southern Hemisphere influenza vaccine](#) has been modified from last year's vaccine.

**Skin infection cluster:** HNE Population Health was recently notified by an emergency department clinician of a cluster of acute skin infections linked to the same tattoo parlour. An investigation was subsequently conducted by the HNE Environmental Health Team and the HNE Infection and Prevention Service. Although skin infections are not notifiable under the Public Health Act, HNEPH is always interested in hearing about disease clusters, as control of a common infection source can prevent further cases.

#### **Immunisation**

**Quad-strain meningococcal vaccine:** the federal government will add a quad-strain vaccine to the National Immunisation Program (NIP). Nimenrix covers the ACWY strains which have been increasingly notified over the past 3 years. These strains have been associated with a high mortality rate. This vaccine is likely to be added to the NIP in the second half of this year and will be available for 12 month old infants.

**New influenza vaccines for the elderly:** In response to last year's severe influenza season, the federal minister for health has announced the introduction of two new trivalent vaccines specifically aimed at protecting people aged over 65. The vaccines are Fluad (containing an adjuvant aimed at improving immunogenicity) and Fluzone High Dose with increased antigen. More than 90% of the estimated 1100 influenza-related deaths reported in Australia last year were people aged over 65 years of age. The new vaccines will be available to seniors without cost through the NIP.

**Tetanus:** 147 cases of tetanus were reported to the National Notifiable Diseases Surveillance System between 1991 and 5 February 2018. Of those reporting vaccination status, 98% were either not immunised or only partially immunised. Thirteen deaths were reported in this time involving people in the age range 44-93 years. The recommended tetanus vaccination schedule (diphtheria-tetanus-whole cell pertussis (DPTw)) involves doses at two, four, six and 18 months of age, with funded booster doses for 4 and 12 year olds. Booster doses are recommended for all adults at the age of 50 years who have not received vaccination in the previous 10 years.

**Communicable disease notifications:**

Table 1. Summary of selected notifiable conditions (YTD\* by year), 2014 – 14 Feb 2018

	Hunter New England (YTD* by year)					Central Coast (YTD* by year)				
	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014
<b>Cryptosporidiosis</b>	13	25	18	22	16	1	8	11	6	5
<b>Gonorrhoea</b>	61	50	31	25	31	41	22	11	13	15
<b>Syphilis</b>	2	8	7	5	8	4	4	2	7	4
<b>Chlamydial Infection</b>	287	283	324	306	255	133	168	133	131	149
<b>Influenza</b>	65	58	19	29	24	41	19	7	5	8
<b>Meningococcal Disease</b>	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
<b>Pertussis</b>	59	103	215	80	38	5	13	125	5	5
<b>Ross River Virus</b>	8	73	10	27	14	0	6	1	15	1
<b>Salmonellosis</b>	57	60	49	68	59	34	78	27	34	36

\*YTD, Year to date for each year (reporting delays may result in changes to 2018 figures)

Population Health contact details (note, 1300 066 055 will find your local PHU)

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This [Communicable Disease Report](#) and previous editions are available on the internet

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