

Hunter New England and Central Coast Public Health Units
Communicable Diseases Report
May 2018

Influenza activity and the vaccine situation
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Influenza: Influenza activity continued to be low across all NSW local health districts throughout May. There was an increase in respiratory presentations to some emergency departments, in part due to asthma. Influenza continued to circulate at inter-seasonal levels, with influenza A at higher levels than influenza B. There has been a 30% increase in vaccination uptake following the severe season in 2017 which has put pressure on vaccine supplies.

Ebola in DRC: The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) is dealing with its 9th Ebola virus outbreak in the past 4 decades. As of 30 May there have been 35 confirmed, 13 probable and 3 suspected cases of haemorrhagic fever and 22 deaths reported. Ring vaccination is underway in rural locations where cases have been reported. Frontline healthcare workers with potential exposure to the virus will also receive vaccine. EcoHealth Alliance is using novel software [FLIRT \(FLight Risk Tracker\)](#) to determine possible spread of the virus by travellers. International disease surveillance is routinely conducted by Population Health Units. Clinicians appreciate that documenting a travel history is an important part of assessing febrile patients as Australians are inveterate travellers with a tendency to visit remote parts of the world where exotic diseases may be contracted. Population Health will continue to monitor the situation in DRC.

Management of urinary tract infections: Inappropriate use of antibiotics, including treating in the absence of urinary symptoms, is driving antimicrobial resistance. The National Prescribing Service and Clinical Excellence Commission have produced short on-line courses regarding the appropriate testing and treatment for [urinary tract infections in aged care facilities](#) and in [patients with catheters in situ](#).

Q Fever toolkit follow up: as mentioned in the [April Communicable Diseases Report](#), a [Q Fever Toolkit](#) has been developed to assist clinicians with disease and immunisation information. In addition, a [one-minute assessment tool \(www.qfevertool.com\)](http://www.qfevertool.com) is now available to assist individuals determine their personal risk of Q fever and whether vaccination is indicated. Note that due to a production problem, availability of Q-vax is currently restricted to urgent cases.

***Legionella longbeachae* and potting mix:** potting mix bags will generally provide a warning that *Legionella* may be present with the recommendation to wear a mask and wash hands. While *Legionella pneumophila* may contaminate cooling towers, whirlpool spas and the like, *Legionella longbeachae* contaminates soil or potting mix. Each year several *Legionella longbeachae* cases are notified to Population Health often involving older people or people with underlying risk factors. Legionnaires' disease usually causes fever, chills, a cough and shortness of breath. Some people also have muscle aches, headache, tiredness, loss of appetite and diarrhoea. People can become very sick with pneumonia; most people recover but the disease is occasionally fatal. Legionnaires' disease most often affects middle-aged and older people, particularly those who smoke or who have chronic lung disease. Also at increased risk are people whose immune systems are suppressed by medications or diseases such as cancer, kidney failure, diabetes or HIV. Further information is available on NSW Health's [Legionnaires disease fact sheet](#).

Communicable disease notifications:

Table 1. Summary of selected notifiable conditions (YTD* by year), 2014 – 15 May 2018

Condition	Hunter New England (YTD* by year)					Central Coast (YTD* by year)				
	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014
Cryptosporidiosis	38	96	54	74	31	18	21	51	18	8
Gonorrhoea	214	160	154	117	107	96	73	38	49	33
Syphilis	33	27	17	18	16	4	13	13	19	19
Chlamydial Infection	1193	1106	1185	997	1068	399	416	388	352	431
Influenza	230	273	174	111	76	100	63	61	28	16
Meningococcal Disease	1	3	2	2	2	0	1	0	0	2
Pertussis	226	295	562	310	85	29	40	250	72	7
Ross River Virus	44	241	53	238	68	5	40	7	56	10
Salmonellosis	190	199	195	201	237	80	148	74	80	93

*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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