

Hunter New England and Central Coast Public Health Units Communicable Diseases Report May 2019

High Influenza activity Current communicable disease alerts Typhoid prevention for travellers

Influenza

At the beginning of 2019, in the peak of summer, there was an unusual period of high influenza activity followed by a dip and recently an increase. Monitoring influenza in the community is notoriously difficult and involves analysis of multiple surveillance systems and activity indicators, each with strengths and weaknesses. Current data suggest Australia could be facing a severe and early start to the influenza season. Vaccination is strongly recommended particularly as deaths have been reported both in high risk individuals and those (including children) without overt risk factors.

Influenza A strains (H3N2, H1N1pdm09) are predominant although influenza B activity is increasing. Viruses characterised to date are similar to the strains covered by the 2019 influenza vaccine. This will be closely monitored as the season evolves.

Fig 1. Total weekly counts of ED visits for influenza-like illness, Jan 1-May 26, 2019 NSW (NSW Health)

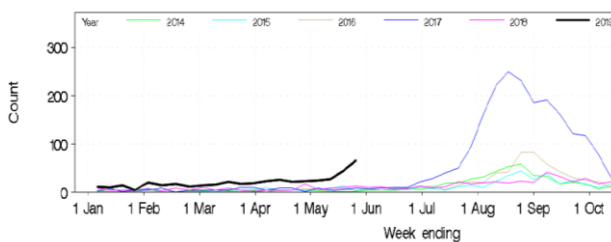


Fig 2. Percentage of laboratory tests positive for influenza A and B by week, Jan 1-May 26, 2019 NSW (NSW Health)

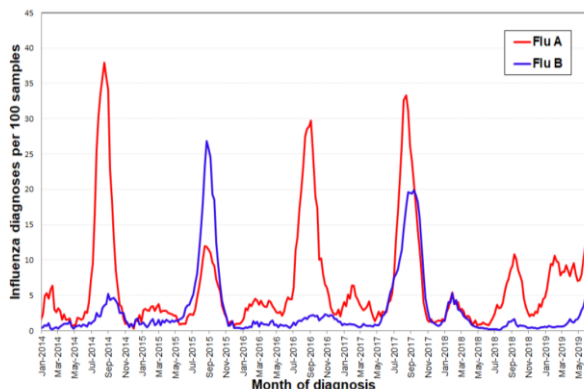


Fig 3. [Flutracking](#) data, 27 May 2019

Low levels of influenza-like illness activity
35,554 participants this week

Flu Symptom Activity:

Fever, cough & time off work or normal duties: 1.6% this week (higher than 5 year average)



*5 year average is calculated using 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017 and 2018 data
*Data are age standardised to the 2011 study

Don't spread flu: It's in your hands

- Get a flu shot
- Sneeze into your elbow
- Clean your hands
- Stay at home if sick



Get a flu shot now

Infectious Disease Alerts

- [Salmonella Enteritidis outbreak linked to eggs](#)
- [Measles alerts - NSW Health](#)

Typhoid

Approximately 11.5 million Australians travelled overseas last year, many to countries where typhoid has been reported. A recent case in a young returned traveller from the Pacific is a timely reminder of the importance of reviewing immunisation before travel. People travelling to tropical countries may be at risk of food and water borne diseases such as typhoid. The incubation period ranges from 3 - 60 days (depending on infective dose and host factors), but is typically 8-14 days. Typhoid may range in presentations from a mild illness with low-grade fever to severe systemic disease. Vaccine effectiveness is estimated at 65% over 3 years in travellers to typhoid-endemic regions.

The possibility of typhoid should be considered in a febrile patient living in, traveling from, or having visited an endemic area. Fever lasting more than three days or accompanying gastrointestinal symptoms (abdominal pain, diarrhoea, or constipation) heightens suspicion. Typhoid should be excluded through blood and stool culture. People involved in food handling, child care or in other high risk settings should be excluded from work until there is laboratory proof that they are no longer infectious.

Immunisation

Influenza vaccine is currently available and recommended to reduce influenza risk. The latest immunisation information can be obtained from the HNE's [To the Point Newsletter](#) and the [NSW Health Immunisation](#) website.

Communicable disease notifications

Table 1. Summary of selected notifiable conditions (YTD* by year), 2014 – 14 May 2019

Condition	Hunter New England# (YTD*)				Central Coast# (YTD*)			
	2019	2018	2017	2016	2019	2018	2017	2016
Cryptosporidiosis	54	42	98	58	6	19	21	51
Gonorrhoea	220	224	169	156	75	96	72	38
Syphilis	39	36	28	18	22	7	14	13
Chlamydial Infection	1243	1264	1174	1238	421	402	415	389
Meningococcal Inf'n	2	1	3	3	1	0	1	0
Pertussis	344	243	313	590	46	28	39	250
Ross River Virus	73	64	253	56	22	6	35	7
Salmonellosis	190	193	200	200	59	79	148	74

*YTD, Year to date for each year (reporting delays may result in changes to 2019 figures)

Hunter New England population: 920,000 #Central Coast population: 350,000

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

Hunter New England: Wallsend Office 4924 6477 - Tamworth Office 6764 8000

Central Coast Public Health Unit: Gosford Office 4320 9730

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

Public Health contact HNELHD-PHENquiries@hnehealth.nsw.gov.au