

**Hunter New England and Central Coast Public Health Units**  
**Communicable Diseases Report**  
**January 2017**

Increased Ross River virus activity  
Varicella zoster vaccine contraindications  
PFAS testing information

**Influenza and respiratory infection**

Influenza activity is at low inter-seasonal levels in Australia, although NSW is currently receiving about 170 notifications each week. Respiratory outbreaks involving influenza A and respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) have been reported in aged care facilities this month. Picornavirus is the most common respiratory virus detected by laboratory surveillance.

Influenza activity continues to increase in the temperate zone of the northern hemisphere, with many countries especially in Europe and East Asia passing their seasonal threshold early in comparison with previous years. North America is also showing increased activity. Worldwide, influenza A(H3N2) virus is the predominant strain and appears to be well matched to that component of the influenza vaccine. The northern hemisphere vaccine is identical to that offered in Australia in 2016.

**Mosquitoes and arbovirus infection**

In the week 15-21 January, 108 Ross River virus notifications were reported in NSW an increase from 82 in the previous reporting week and double the historical average. A range of arboviruses have been detected from mosquito traps, principally from the south of the state but also from around the Georges River in Sydney. People are reminded that [protection against mosquito bites](#) is the best form of prevention. Dengue and Zika cases continue to be reported from Pacific Island nations including areas that are favourite tourist destinations.

**Varicella zoster vaccine**

Zoster vaccine is funded for people aged 70-79 years but can also be beneficial for those over 60 years of age. As it is a live attenuated vaccine there are contraindications for use, particularly for those who are immune-suppressed. Zoster vaccine information can be obtained from the [Australian Immunisation Handbook](#) and more specific information on contraindications is available from the [National Centre for Immunisation Research and Surveillance](#) including a table listing immune-suppressive medications and recommendations.

## Per- and poly-fluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) testing – information for GPs

People who reside or have worked in the Williamstown Investigation Area are eligible to participate in a voluntary blood testing program funded by the Federal Department of Health. Commonwealth guidance on pre-and post-test counselling and patient resources can be accessed on the [Department of Health website](#). Documentation for accessing PFAS testing is available on the [Primary Healthcare Network website](#). Further information sessions for GPs will be held in the coming weeks and advertised through the PHN.

## Foodborne disease outbreaks

The warm conditions of summer coupled with activities such as picnics and festive gatherings provide an ideal opportunity for bacterial multiplication and foodborne disease outbreaks. The Population Health Unit encourages reporting of outbreaks (two or more cases of associated gastroenteritis) to enable prompt investigation and implementation of interventions. Early recognition of an outbreak can prevent ongoing distribution of contaminated food items and further cases.

## Communicable disease notifications

Table 1. Summary of selected notifiable conditions (YTD\* by year), 2013 – 17 January 2017

	Hunter New England (YTD* by year)					Central Coast (YTD* by year)				
	2017	2016	2015	2014	2013	2017	2016	2015	2014	2013
<b>Cryptosporidiosis</b>	3	3	2	3	2	3	3	1	1	0
<b>Gonorrhoea</b>	5	2	4	2	1	6	5	6	7	3
<b>Syphilis</b>	0	3	1	0	1	1	0	2	1	1
<b>Chlamydial Infection</b>	36	56	49	22	30	50	56	36	58	38
<b>Influenza</b>	2	3	7	8	3	5	3	1	2	0
<b>Meningococcal Disease</b>	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Pertussis</b>	14	40	16	10	6	6	51	1	4	4
<b>Ross River Virus</b>	7	2	4	4	3	0	0	7	1	1
<b>Salmonellosis</b>	13	7	13	15	8	31	8	15	10	13

\*YTD Year to date for each year (reporting delays may result in changes to 2017 figures)

### 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

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