

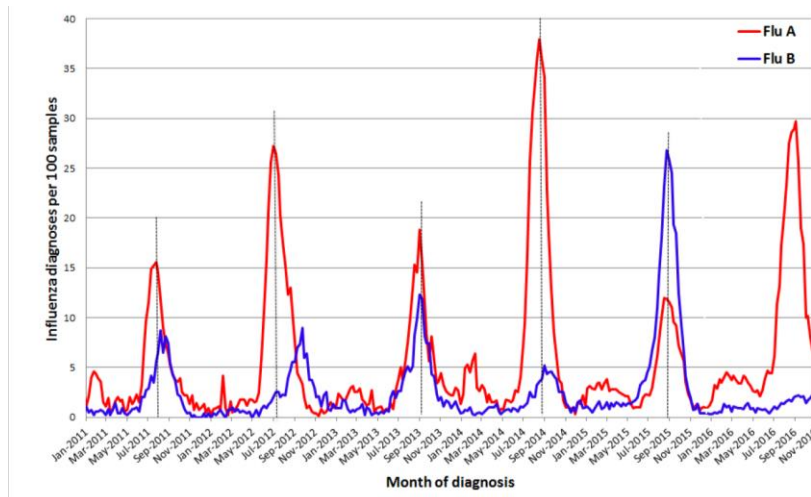
Hunter New England and Central Coast Public Health Units Communicable Diseases Report November 2016

Increased mosquito collections indicating higher arboviral risk
Meningococcal disease awareness
Thunderstorm asthma

Influenza and respiratory infection

In the southern hemisphere, influenza activity is now at inter-seasonal levels, however, there were still 1658 influenza A and 0 influenza B notifications in NSW in the past fortnight. Figure 1 shows it has been an unusual season with little influenza B although a typical activity peak. Influenza notifications for 2016 (Table 1) show an increase over previous years which is most likely explained as an increase in testing. Other, more specific influenza surveillance systems (such as FluTracking) shows 2016 was an 'average' year.

Figure 1. Percentage of laboratory tests positive for influenza A and influenza B. 1 January 2011 to 30 October 2016, New South Wales.



Source: NSW Health

Mosquitoes and arbovirus infection

The NSW Ministry of Health has issued alerts to GPs and pharmacists regarding an increased risk of arbovirus infection. Mosquito trapping has yielded numbers above the average for this time of year and there have been 9 Ross River virus and 4 Barmah Forest virus detections already, all from the south of the state. It is not clear if this will have an impact on the Hunter New England or Central Coast areas but people are reminded that [protection against mosquito bites](#) is the best form of prevention. Patients with arboviral disease typically present with symptoms of fever, rash and arthralgia.

Meningococcal Disease

In NSW there have been 69 cases of meningococcal disease reported so far in 2016, including four fatal infections. In the same period of 2015 there were 38 cases notified with two deaths. This apparent increase is still within the historical range for notifications. In an unusual trend, 42% of Australian cases this year have been serogroup W. For information on vaccination options see the [Immunisation Handbook](#).

Symptoms of meningococcal disease can be non-specific and may include sudden onset of fever, headache, neck stiffness, joint pain, a rash of red-purple spots or bruises, dislike of bright lights, leg pain, nausea and vomiting. Symptoms in young children include irritability, difficulty waking, high-pitched crying, and refusal to eat. Gastrointestinal symptoms have been a feature in patients with serogroup W infection.

Viral Gastroenteritis

Emergency department surveillance shows ongoing high levels of gastroenteritis activity across NSW, with 2,093 presentations and 476 admissions recorded in the past week. There was a notable increase amongst young children aged 5–16 years. This is also reflected in a high number of gastroenteritis outbreaks in child care institutions. People with gastroenteritis should avoid visiting others in vulnerable settings such as hospitals or aged care facilities, or allowing their children to attend childcare or school. For people working in food preparation, or looking after children or the elderly, it is recommended not to return to work until 48 hours after symptoms have ceased.

Thunderstorm asthma

A recent spate of severe asthma cases including deaths was recently experienced in Melbourne following thunderstorm activity. This phenomenon results from an uptake and fragmentation of pollen or other allergens ahead of a storm cell. Hayfever and sinusitis often occur in the weeks beforehand and some people experience asthma for the first time. For asthmatics, it is important to maintain asthma medication and to stay inside. People with hayfever or sinusitis should consult their GP and ensure access to asthma medication. Additional information is available from the [Health Victoria](http://www.health.vic.gov.au) website.

Communicable disease notifications

Table 1. Summary of selected notifiable conditions (YTD* by year), 2012 – 15 November 2016

	Hunter New England (YTD* by year)					Central Coast (YTD* by year)				
	2016	2015	2014	2013	2012	2016	2015	2014	2013	2012
Cryptosporidiosis	88	131	50	135	74	60	26	10	28	30
Gonorrhoea	349	235	241	182	235	115	86	63	87	52
Syphilis	44	54	33	35	26	11	33	34	28	30
Chlamydial Inf'n	2693	2586	2538	2680	2714	940	809	926	751	921
Influenza	3187	2606	2797	437	1107	1061	729	373	77	132
Meningococcal Disease	8	7	9	11	8	<5	<5	<5	<5	<5
Pertussis	1142	1005	369	232	540	359	447	19	33	212
Ross River Virus	85	363	185	114	145	7	72	24	17	24
Salmonellosis	367	376	416	359	286	149	114	151	111	116

*YTD Year to date for each year (reporting delays may result in changes to 2016 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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