



Centre for Disease Control

NT HEALTH

Public Health Alert

Issued: 19 April
Issued by: Chief Health Officer
Issued to: Clinicians

Increase in Influenza

Summary

- There has been a significant increase in influenza infections across the NT in the last few weeks. In 2024 to-date, 650 cases of influenza have been notified with 382 (59%) of those notifications received since 1 April. Around half of those (49%) have been in Aboriginal people. Most notifications have come from the Darwin region, particularly in urban areas. However, notifications from East Arnhem have been steadily increasing over the last fortnight, and also in Katherine region since last week.
- Notifications are fairly evenly spread across age groups, with young children and infants slightly more affected. Almost all notifications have been for influenza A, and include the subtype H3N2 which has not circulated to any degree for the last 3 years in the NT. To be protected, people need to be vaccinated now with the 2024 flu vaccine.
- Influenza cases are likely to continue to increase throughout the Northern Territory over the coming weeks. Health services in the Royal Darwin Hospital and Palmerston Regional Hospital are experiencing very high numbers of presentations to the Emergency Department and hospital admissions related to influenza-like illnesses, and a Code Yellow has been enacted. Be alert for cases of influenza and influenza-like illnesses in your community, promote vaccination, and encourage other behaviours to minimise transmission of respiratory viruses.
- Further national surveillance information is also available [here](#).

Actions

The strategy for flu control - **Vaccinate. Test. Treat. Prevent.**

- **Vaccinate** everyone over 6 months, but in particular those eligible for free vaccine as deemed at higher risk. This year's flu vaccine is now available. See [here](#) for more information.
- **Test** cases of influenza-like illness (ILI) for flu, COVID, and RSV. This includes sending to the lab for testing if it is not available at point of care. ILI is defined as an acute respiratory illness with symptoms including fever and cough.
- **Treat** suspect flu cases with antivirals for flu if they are high risk, moderately unwell or deteriorating and evaluate COVID-19 cases for anti-virals if indicated.

- **Prevent spread** by promoting the use of masks in symptomatic people and using personal protective equipment (PPE). Isolate cases and promote hand hygiene, social distancing and cough etiquette.

Vaccinate

Influenza vaccine is now available and can be administered at the same time as other vaccines including COVID-19 and pneumococcal vaccines.

Who is eligible for the funded (free) influenza vaccine?

- Adults \geq 65 years of age (recommended Fludax® Quad)
- All children aged 6 months to less than 5 years
- Aboriginal people aged 6 months and over
- All people aged 6 months and over with a medical condition increasing the risk of severe influenza and its complications. See [here](#) for a list of medical conditions
- Pregnant women in all trimesters

Quadrivalent Influenza Vaccine 2024	
Age	Vaccine Brand
6 months to 64 years	Fluarix Tetra® 0.5ml or Vaxigrip® Tetra 0.5ml
65 years and older	Fludax® Quad 0.5ml

Test

All patients presenting with ILI should be tested for influenza, COVID, and RSV. Send to the lab if not available at point of care. Follow the current advice regarding testing for other respiratory illnesses.

Treat

Antivirals such as oseltamivir (Tamiflu) reduce morbidity and symptoms and are indicated for people with influenza-like illness who might have flu based on clinical or epidemiological grounds. Further information on oseltamivir is available on the NT Centre for Disease Control [factsheet](#).

Prevent spread

All respiratory infections are contagious and have the potential to cause serious illness, particularly in the vulnerable. Any person who has acute respiratory symptoms should not attend childcare, school or work and should wear a surgical mask in the public setting. When attending a health care facility they should be seated at least 1.5 metres away from other patients, or preferably in a separate area from other patients. Health staff consulting patients with possible ILI should wear an N95 mask, gloves, gown and eye protection and perform hand hygiene prior to and following each patient care encounter.

Contact

CDC Darwin	Ph 8922 8044	Fax 8922 8310	cdcsurveillance.darwin@nt.gov.au
CDC Alice Springs	Ph 8951 7540	Fax 8951 7900	cdc.alicesprings@nt.gov.au
CDC Katherine	Ph 8973 9049	Fax 8973 9048	cdc.katherine@nt.gov.au
CDC Tennant Creek	Ph 8962 4259	Fax 8962 4420	cdc.barkly@nt.gov.au
CDC Nhulunbuy	Ph 8987 0357	Fax 8987 0500	cdcgove.doh@nt.gov.au

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Issued by: Dr Hayley Dyke, A/Director, Centre for Disease Control, Public Health Division, NT Health

Centre for Disease Control
Public Health Division

 (08) 8922 8044 or 1800 008 002
 CDCSurveillance.DARWIN@nt.gov.au