

Surveillance Update

Issued: April 2024

In this issue:

- Influenza is here
- Mosquito-borne diseases

Influenza is here

- There have been 976 cases of influenza notified in 2024 to-date, with 707 (72%) of those notifications received since 1 April. Most notifications have come from the Darwin region, particularly in urban areas, and in the past week those notifications appear to be decreasing again (see Figure). Notifications from East Arnhem continue to be received, and have been steadily incoming since the week of February 19. There has been an increase in notifications in Alice Springs in the last fortnight (also from urban areas), which could be expected to continue in the coming weeks (see Figure).

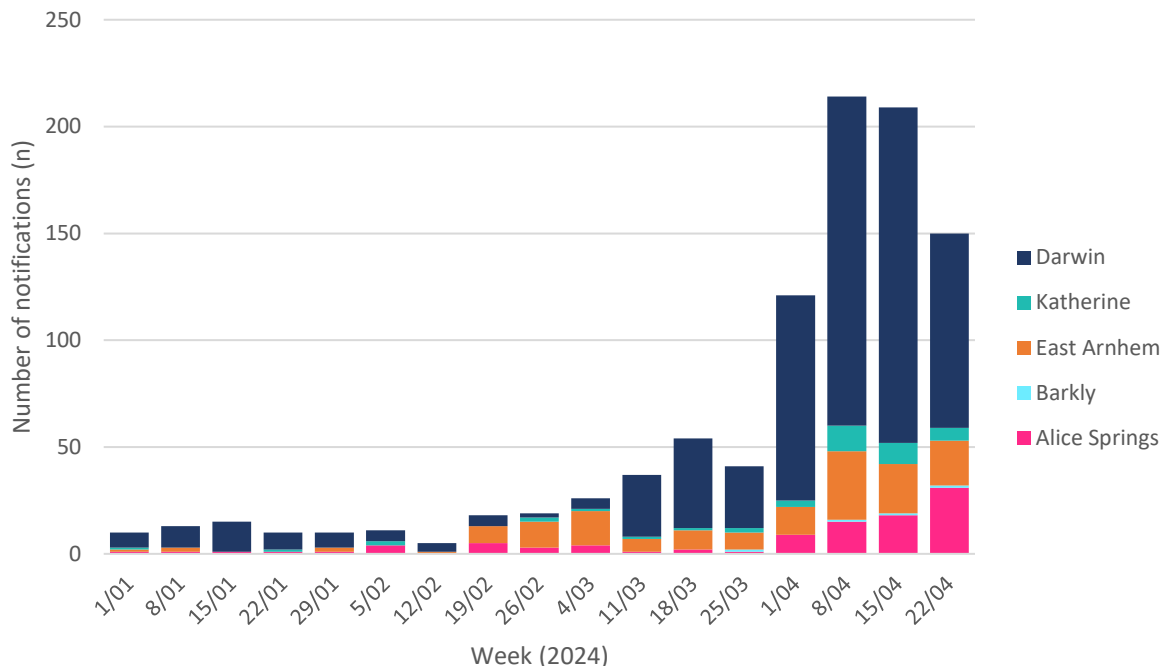


Figure: Number of notifications of influenza to the NT CDC by week and region, between 1 January and 28 April 2024

- Almost all notifications have been for influenza A, and include the subtype H3N2 which has not circulated for some time in the NT.

- During the month of April, the Royal Darwin Hospital and Palmerston Regional Hospital experienced very high numbers of presentations to the Emergency Departments and admissions for influenza-like illnesses, and Code Yellows were enacted.
- The best strategy to control influenza is to vaccinate everyone over 6 months old, test for flu, and treat people with moderate to severe symptoms and those at higher risk for severe disease with antivirals.
- The 2024 influenza vaccinations are available now from GP's, health clinics, and selected pharmacies. Free flu vaccines under the National Immunisation Program (NIP) are available to:
 - Children 6 months to < 5 years
 - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 6 months and over
 - People aged 65 years and over
 - Pregnant women at any stage of pregnancy
 - People aged 6 months and over with chronic medical conditions
- More information is available here: [2024 National Immunisation Program influenza vaccination](#)
- The following advice is important for patients with any influenza-like illness to protect themselves, their families, and their communities:
 - **Stay home** from childcare, school, or work until symptoms have resolved
 - **Do not visit** places where there may be vulnerable people while sick (e.g. nursing homes)
 - **Wash hands** frequently and immediately dispose of used tissues
- To assist in national syndromic surveillance of respiratory viruses we encourage staff, clinicians and their patients to participate in FluTracking, an initiative by researchers from Hunter New England Health and the University of Newcastle (funded by the Department of Health and Aged Care). The survey takes 20 seconds or less to complete each week, and helps monitor symptoms of respiratory diseases in Australia in real-time. Find out more and register at: www.flutracking.net
- **Get vaccinated** – 2024 influenza vaccinations are available now

Mosquito-borne diseases

- Increased numbers of mosquito-borne diseases in returned international travellers continue to be notified in the NT.
 - There have been 17 notifications of dengue fever in returned travellers from overseas in 2024 to-date. Of these 16 were acquired in Indonesia (15 in Bali, 1 in Java), and 1 was acquired in Timor-Leste. One case required hospitalisation.
 - There has been 1 return traveller from Bali, Indonesia diagnosed with Zika virus infection – the last case of Zika diagnosed in the NT was in 2019 (travelling from Thailand)
 - People who have been diagnosed with dengue should not travel to Tennant Creek until their symptoms have resolved. *Aedes aegypti*, the mosquito that can carry dengue, has been detected in Tennant Creek and the dengue mosquito elimination program is currently ongoing to eliminate this vector. Until *Aedes aegypti* is eliminated, there remains a risk of establishing the dengue virus in these mosquitoes if a person viraemic with dengue is bitten.
- Many mosquito-borne diseases can cause these symptoms – some may be acquired in Australia, overseas, or both. They include dengue, Ross River virus, Barmah Forest virus, Murray Valley

Encephalitis, Japanese Encephalitis, chikungunya, kunjin, and malaria. Please include mosquito-borne diseases in your differential diagnoses for patients presenting with fever, rash, or muscle and joint pains.

- More information on mosquito-borne diseases can be found here: [Public health and notifiable diseases | NT Health](#)
- The best defence against mosquito-borne diseases is to avoid being bitten by mosquitoes. More information can be found here: [Protection against mosquitoes | NT Health](#)

This update was prepared by Dr Hayley Dyke (Head of the Surveillance Unit) and NT CDC staff. We encourage NT health staff to circulate this to their clinical colleagues.

Contact: View all CDC units NT wide at the [NT Health website](#).