



**NORTHERN
TERRITORY
GOVERNMENT**

Centre for Disease Control

NT HEALTH

Surveillance Update

Issued: May 2024

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Respiratory viruses – COVID-19 increasing

- At the end of April and throughout May notifications for cases of COVID-19 have been increasing (see Figure 1). There were 419 notifications for cases of COVID-19 in May, which is around 2.5 times more than the 173 cases in April.
- The majority (325) of notifications for COVID-19 in May were from the Darwin region, however, notifications are now also starting to increase in Alice Springs at the time of publication.
- In May, 98 of the COVID-19 notifications were hospitalised, with 77 (79%) of those in the Darwin region. There were no deaths notified in this month.
- Numbers of notifications for influenza peaked in April for the Top End, and in early May for Central Australia, and then steadily decreased throughout May. Numbers of notifications for RSV also decreased this month (see Figure 1).

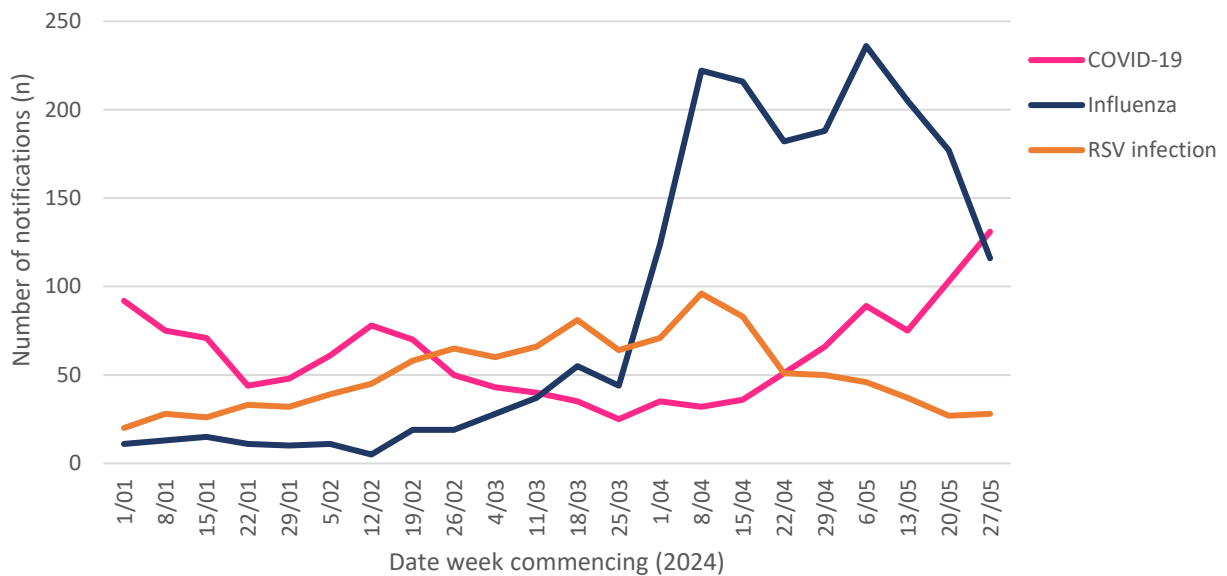


Figure 1: Number of notifications of COVID-19, influenza, and RSV to the NT CDC by week, 1 January to 2 June 2024

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- The best strategy to control respiratory viruses is to test, treat, vaccinate (where relevant), and prevent spread.
 - **Treat** – consider antivirals for COVID-19 and influenza for patients at higher risk for severe disease, or who are moderately unwell or deteriorating.
 - **Vaccinate** – vaccines are widely available for COVID-19 and influenza, and RSV vaccines available to people over the age of 60
 - **COVID-19** – people 18 years and older are eligible for annual boosters, and they are recommended for people aged 65 years and older. See this page for information about primary and booster dose eligibility: [COVID-19 vaccine advice and recommendations for 2024](#)
 - **Influenza** – 2024 influenza vaccines are available from GP's, health clinics, and selected pharmacies, and are free for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, children under 5 years old, people 65 years and older, pregnant women, and people with certain chronic medical conditions. More information is available here: [2024 National Immunisation Program influenza vaccination](#)
 - **Prevent spread** – encourage patients with respiratory symptoms to stay home from childcare, school, work, and places where there may be vulnerable people until symptoms have resolved, and educate them on disposing of used tissues and hand hygiene.
- To assist in national syndromic surveillance of respiratory viruses we encourage everyone to participate in FluTracking. The survey takes 20 seconds or less to complete each week, and asks about symptoms of respiratory diseases. Find out more and register at: www.flutracking.net
- Find out more about COVID-19 in the NT here: [COVID-19 | NT Health - COVID-19](#)

Dengue in returned travellers and international outbreaks

- The NT has seen a surge in notifications of mosquito-borne diseases among international travellers, in particular dengue fever:
 - There have been 29 notifications of **dengue fever** in returned travellers from overseas in 2024 to-date. Of these, 28 were acquired in Indonesia (27 in Bali, 1 in Java), and 1 was acquired in Timor-Leste. Three cases required hospitalisation.
 - There have now been 2 cases of **Zika** virus infection in returned travellers from Bali, Indonesia and Timor Leste, and 1 additional case locally from person-to-person transmission.
 - People with dengue fever or Zika virus infection should not travel to Tennant Creek until their symptoms have resolved. *Aedes aegypti*, the mosquito that can carry these infections, has been detected in Tennant Creek. There is an elimination program currently ongoing to remove 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.
 - There have also been 9 notifications for **malaria** in people who have travelled overseas, acquired in African countries and South-East Asia.
- There are ongoing outbreaks of **measles** internationally, of note Indonesia has declared an outbreak across multiple provinces. There has also been an increase in cases of **rubella** in Indonesia. There has not yet been any confirmed cases of measles or rubella in the NT this year.
- Clinicians are reminded to encourage people to get up to-date with **all recommended vaccines** before travelling overseas. Consider mosquito-borne and vaccine-preventable diseases in your

differential diagnoses for patients presenting with fever, rash, or muscle and joint pains, and always include a travel history.

- 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](#)
- More information on mosquito-borne diseases can be found here: [Public health and notifiable diseases | NT Health](#)
- More information on vaccination against measles, mumps, and rubella can be found here: [Measles vaccination | NT.GOV.AU](#)

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](#).