Virus WAWatch

Week ending 10th January 2021

Key Points

It is important to note that the influenza and ILI surveillance systems in WA have been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, interpretation of respiratory viral activity should be done with caution and take into account the effects of changes in health seeking behaviour including accessing alternate health services such as telehealth, focused testing for COVID-19 at COVID-19 clinics or specific acute respiratory infection clinics and the impact of physical distancing measures.

Influenza and influenza-like illnesses (ILI)

- **Summary:** Indicators of influenza activity remain below interseasonal levels.
- ILI activity at sentinel EDs decreased over the past two weeks. ILI activity at sentinel GPs remains below levels usually seen at this time of year.
- There were no positive influenza samples reported by PathWest in the past week.
- RSV detections were higher than levels usually reported at this time of year.

Gastroenteritis

- Gastroenteritis presentations at sentinel GPs were in the mid-range of levels normally reported at this time of year. The rate of gastroenteritis presentations at sentinel EDs was below baseline levels.
- PathWest laboratory detections of norovirus were stable in the past week, and rotavirus notifications remained at low levels.

Other vaccine-preventable diseases

- **Shingles and chickenpox:** Shingles presentations at sentinel GPs and sentinel EDs were above baseline levels. Chickenpox presentations at sentinel EDs were at baseline levels this week.
- **Measles:** No measles cases were notified in the past week.
- **Mumps:** No mumps cases were notified in the past week.
- **Rubella:** No rubella cases were notified in the past week.
- **Invasive meningococcal disease (IMD):** No IMD cases were notified in the past week.

Other diseases

- **Coronavirus COVID-19:** As of 11 January 2021, a total of 879 COVID-19 cases have been confirmed in WA. See [webpage](http://ww2.health.wa.gov.au/Articles/F_I/infectious-disease-data/Virus-WAWatch) for further information.
Influenza and influenza-like illnesses

The rate of ILI presentations to sentinel GPs in the past week remains in the lower range of levels usually reported at this time of year. There were no samples submitted for influenza testing by sentinel GPs in the past week. The rate of ILI presentations to EDs has decreased in the last two weeks.

*The graph is a summary of presentations at Emergency Department Sentinel Surveillance (EDSS) sites using the ICD codes B34.9 and J06.9 which are consistent with a clinical presentation of a viral illness. This data may differ from that presented in the Winter Respiratory Illness Report provided by the Information and System Performance Directorate.
The graph is a summary of respiratory viral presentations at Emergency Department Sentinel Surveillance (EDSS) sites using the ICD codes B34.9 and J06.9 which are consistent with a clinical presentation of a viral illness. This data may differ from that presented in the Winter Respiratory Illness Report provided by the Information and System Performance Directorate.

Respiratory viral presentations to sentinel EDs has decreased in the last two weeks but remain higher than levels usually reported at this time of year.

The graph is a summary of all influenza notifications received by the DoH, Western Australia to the end of the current reporting week, for which cases had date of symptom onset or specimen collection between 04/01/2020 and 10/01/2021. The seasonal threshold defines a value above which may indicate epidemic seasonal influenza activity. The threshold value is calculated based on analysis of seasonal influenza data from the past four years.

Influenza notifications reported to the Department of Health in the past week remain below the seasonal threshold. No influenza notifications were received by the Department of Health in the past week.
The graph is a summary of all WA samples reported by PathWest, excluding samples referred by other private laboratories for influenza subtyping.

The percentage of specimens positive for influenza virus at PathWest remains below levels usually reported at this time of year. None of the 679 specimens submitted for influenza testing were positive for influenza in the past week.

**Influenza types and subtypes, 2020 to 2021**

The graph is a summary of all WA samples positive for influenza reported at PathWest, excluding samples referred by other private laboratories for influenza subtyping. *These samples were tested using a rapid testing method that does not determine the influenza subtype (i.e. influenza A/H3N2 or A/H1N1).*

No PCR positive influenza samples have been reported by PathWest since July 2020.
The graph is a summary of all WA samples positive for a common respiratory virus other than influenza reported at PathWest.

RSV increased well beyond usual levels from mid November 2019 reaching a peak. RSV detections remained significantly higher than levels usually reported at this time of the year.

COVID-19 activity remains low in Western Australia. The majority of cases have been acquired overseas or at sea.
Gastroenteritis presentations to sentinel GPs were in the mid-range of values usually reported at this time of year.

Gastroenteritis presentations and admissions to sentinel EDs in the past week were below baseline levels.
The number of gastroenteritis presentations to sentinel EDs remain well below the range of values normally reported at this time of year.

**Viral rashes**

The following is a summary of current Emergency Department sentinel surveillance (EDSS) data for varicella-zoster virus presentations.

**GP varicella-zoster virus presentations**

Baseline levels for chickenpox and shingles presentations to WA ASPREN GPs per thousand consultations were calculated using the mean of weekly WA ASPREN data from week 1, 2016 to week 52, 2020.

Only one chickenpox presentation has been reported by sentinel GPs in the past eight weeks. Shingles presentations in the past week have remained above baseline levels.
Baseline levels for varicella-zoster virus presentations were calculated using the mean of weekly EDIS data from week 1, 2016 to week 52, 2020.

Shingles presentations at sentinel EDs decreased in recent weeks but remain above baseline levels. Over the past week, chickenpox presentations at sentinel EDs were at baseline levels.

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