

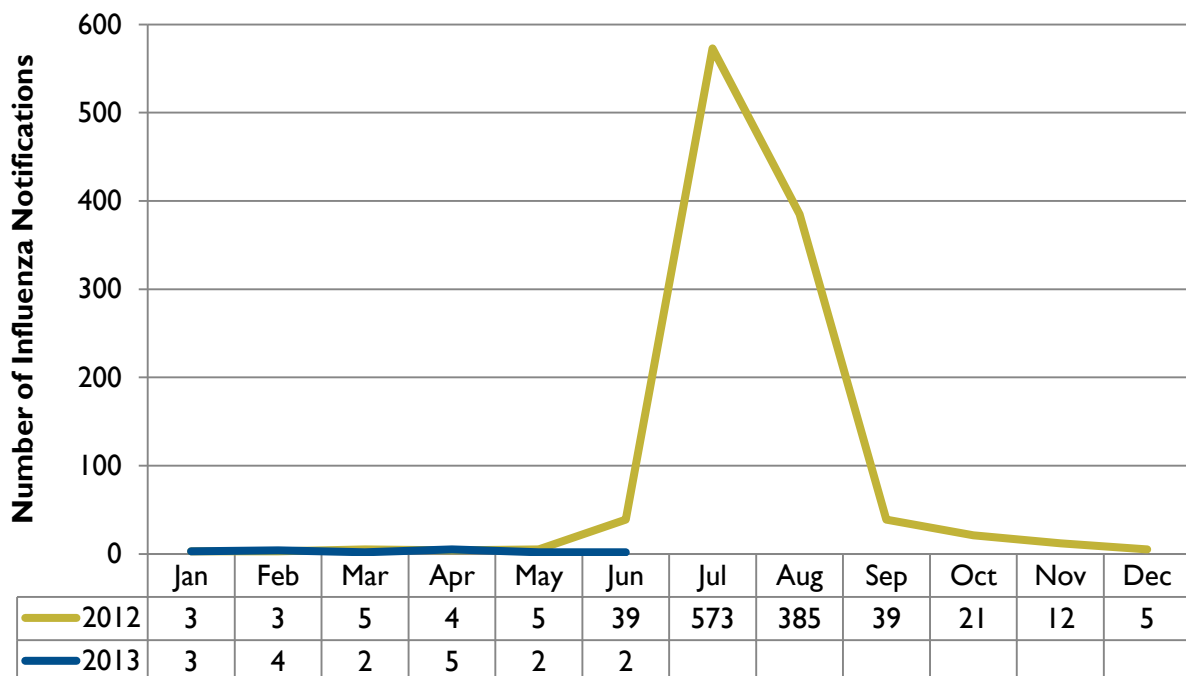
Summary

- Systems are reporting low levels of influenza like illness, low levels of influenza testing, and a small number of influenza cases notified during 2013 to date.

Influenza notifications

Tasmanian laboratories are required to notify evidence of influenza infection in specimens collected from patients. These specimens are usually nose or throat swabs but sometimes blood tests.

Influenza notifications 2012 - 2013 (at 23 June 2013)



18 influenza notifications have been received during 2013 up to 23 June 2013. This low level of activity is typical outside of the peak season, when there is limited circulation of influenza in the community.

Influenza types

During 2013 up to 23 June, 15 influenza A notifications and 3 influenza B notification were received.

Influenza type in confirmed cases 2013 (at 23 June 2013)

	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	TOTAL
Influenza A	2	4	2	3	2	2							15
Influenza B	1	0	0	2	0	0							3

Influenza-like illnesses (Syndromic Surveillance)

Influenza-like illness (ILI) is much more common than microbiologically confirmed influenza. For much of the year, common colds and other respiratory illnesses make up most of the ILI occurring in the community. However, during the annual influenza season, the proportion of the population experiencing symptoms of ILI usually increases. It is therefore useful to monitor the proportion of people reporting ILI, regardless of the cause.

FluTracking

FluTracking is a weekly online survey that asks participants to report whether they have had fever and cough in the preceding week. It is a joint initiative of Newcastle University, Hunter New England Population Health and the Hunter Medical Research Institute. For more information, go to www.flutracking.net.

FluTracking is reporting low levels of ILI activity in Tasmania.

General practice surveillance

ASPREN is a network of registered sentinel GPs throughout the state who report fortnightly on the number and proportion of presentations of patients with fever, cough and fatigue. ASPREN is a joint initiative of the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners and University of Adelaide: www.dmac.adelaide.edu.au/aspren.

Tasmanian data from participating General Practices up to the fortnight ending 2 June 2013 indicated that the level of influenza-like illness presentations remained low. This trend is consistent with a return to low influenza activity evident through other surveillance mechanisms at that time.

Other measures of influenza activity

FluCAN

The Influenza Complications Alert Network (FluCAN) reports on influenza related hospitalisations and complications in sentinel hospitals in each state. During 2013 up to 18 June there have been low numbers of admissions to national sentinel hospitals with confirmed influenza.

Interstate activity

While Northern Australia has experienced typically higher levels of influenza during the summer inter-epidemic period, other states have experienced low disease levels thus far during 2013.

Annual Influenza Vaccine

The contents of the annual influenza vaccine are reviewed late each year, aiming to have vaccines produced for the following year that provide protection from the strains of influenza that are likely to be common during winter. The recommended formulation of the 2013 vaccine includes two significant changes from the vaccines used in 2011 and 2012. These are described at <http://www.tga.gov.au/about/committees-aivc.htm>.

Annual vaccination is recommended and is free* for Tasmanians at risk of severe influenza, including:

- anyone aged 65 and over
- Indigenous people who are aged 15 years or over
- pregnant women
- any person six months of age and over with a chronic condition predisposing to severe influenza illness that requires regular medical follow-up or hospitalisation such as: cardiac disease, respiratory disease including severe asthmatics, kidney disease, diabetes, impaired immunity, neuromuscular disease.

* The cost of the vaccine is covered for these groups; there may be a consultation fee for the medical provider to administer the vaccine.

Help prevent the spread of flu and other respiratory viruses

Flu and other respiratory viruses are easily passed from person to person through the air when infected people cough or sneeze without covering their mouths or noses. As well as getting the seasonal flu vaccination, there are some basic things you can do to help prevent the spread of flu and other respiratory viruses.



Wash your hands regularly, especially before touching your face, food or utensils.



If you do get sick, please don't share it – cover your mouth when you cough or sneeze with the inside of your elbow. If you cover a cough or sneeze with your hands, remember to wash your hands afterwards.



Stay away from work or school if you are ill.



The **fluTAS Report** is a fortnightly flu season update produced by the Public and Environmental Health Service to inform healthcare organisations and the public about the current level of flu activity in Tasmania.

Alongside routine surveillance of diseases in Tasmania, the report combines multiple data sources to obtain a measure of flu activity in the community, which can be used by our health system to prepare and respond.

To provide feedback on the fluTAS Report, email the [Communicable Disease Prevention Unit](#) or call the Public Health Hotline on 1800 671 738.