

NHS GRAMPIAN HEALTH PROTECTION NEWSLETTER

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2023 First quarter review

The most common infections notified to the health protection team in the first quarter of the year (January-March), are summarised below. Predictably, Campylobacteriosis and Salmonellosis make up the majority of the cases. IGAS infections have also been rife in the first quarter of the year, especially in February and March. The comparison chart below shows that IGAS figures for the first quarter of 2023 is four times the average of the comparator years (2018, 2019 and 2022). However, Campylobacteriosis figures has been lower in comparison to the first quarter of these years, as well as their average. Moreover, although a little higher than the average of the comparator years, 2023 first quarter Salmonellosis cases are not far from the usual for this time of the year.

COVID-19 Spring Booster

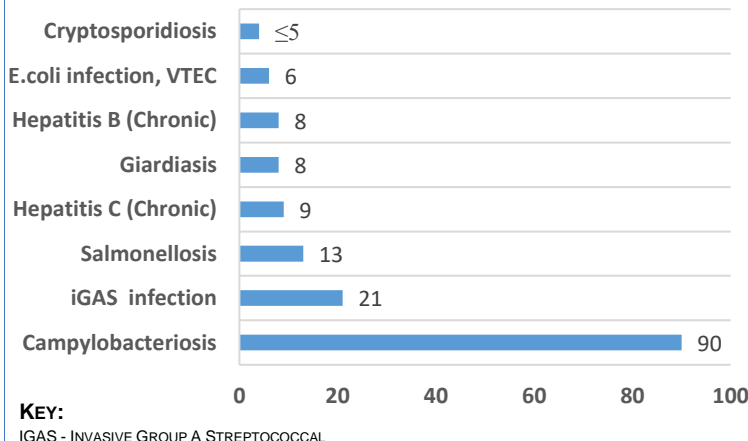
The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) has issued advice that a COVID-19 Spring Booster dose should be offered to adults aged 75 years and over (including those who will turn 75 by 30 June 2023). Also eligible are residents in care homes for older adults and those aged 5 years and over with a weakened immune system.

COVID-19 has disproportionately affected these individuals and it is for this reason these groups are being offered an additional booster dose. The Spring Booster dose will be offered around six months (24 weeks) after the previous dose of the COVID-19 vaccine. Some people may be invited sooner than this (at least 12 weeks since the last dose) to help to protect against any potential increase in COVID-19 infections.

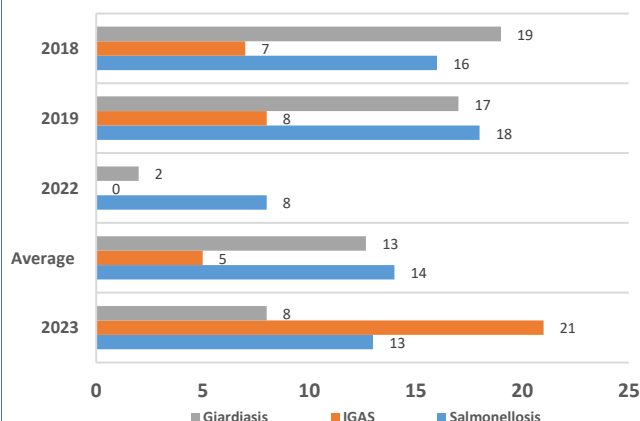
COVID-19 vaccine protection can reduce over time so receiving this booster dose will help provide the best protection available to the most vulnerable. It should help to reduce the risk of developing serious illness and hospitalisation as a result of infection with COVID-19.

Consent Forms were sent out to Care Homes prior to starting the programme on 27th March 2023. NHS Scotland will contact other eligible individuals by letter, email or text. It is expected that the spring booster programme will continue over a 10 week period ending on 30 June 2023.

2023 First Quarter



First quarter comparison chart



“Enjoy the great outdoors but be tick aware”

As the weather warms up more people will be enjoying the Scottish outdoors and countryside. However, it is important to be aware that ‘tick’ numbers begin to increase in spring and throughout summer. They reside in the countryside vegetation and have the potential to transmit bacterial or viral illness to humans.

What are ticks?



Ticks are small spider-like creatures usually 1mm to 1cm long that can be found on long grass, bushes and undergrowth in the countryside, woodlands, urban parks and gardens. Locally, the most common tick is the sheep or deer tick. They are more common between March and October, but can be found all year round. Ticks feed on animal and human blood and can transmit bacteria and viruses that can cause illnesses in humans such as Lyme disease and tick borne encephalitis. However, not all ticks are infected and the majority of tick bites will not result in illness. Ticks don’t jump or fly, they climb on and bite to attach to the skin when an animal or human brushes past and they start to feed on blood. It may take several days to complete their blood meal, before dropping off. Tick bites do not necessarily hurt, so the first sign of having being bitten, may be a reddened circle that expands away from the bite and clears in the centre, this is often described as a “bullseye rash”.

**Lyme disease
bullseye rash**



Advice to reduce the risk – Prevention is Key

- When out walking, keep to clearly defined footpaths, trying to avoid brushing against vegetation such as long grass.
- Wear appropriate clothing that covers bare skin (a long-sleeved shirt and trousers tucked into socks)
- Wearing light-coloured fabrics may help to spot a tick on clothes
- Use insect repellent on exposed skin
- Check the skin regularly for ticks, particularly at the end of the day, including head (hairline/scalp for children), neck and skin folds (armpits, groin, and waistband) – **remove any ticks promptly**
- Checking pets for ticks in their fur

Action when bitten by a Tick

**Tick attached
to skin**



Removing all ticks quickly will help prevent infection. They are best removed using a tick removal device available in pharmacies, vets and outdoor shops. However, fine tipped tweezers can also be used to lift the tick off.

To remove the tick, grip the head of the tick as close to the skin as possible and pull steadily, being careful not to squeeze the body of the tick. The tick should not be burned or covered with oils or lotions. After removal of the tick the area should be cleaned with an antiseptic solution

or soap and water. A video clip showing how to remove a tick is available on the NHS Inform website here [NHS Inform](https://www.nhs.uk/health-a-z/ticks/).

**Tick removal
with tweezers**



When to consult the GP or 111

- If a circular “bullseye” rash appears (usually appears within 1-4 weeks after being bitten) around the bite.
- If feeling generally unwell with flu-like symptoms, headaches, malaise, muscle and joint pain after being bitten.
- Sometimes people are not aware they have been bitten, however, if they have been visiting outdoors in areas such as forests or grassy areas and have developed any of the above symptoms they should seek medical advice.

Useful Resources

<https://www.nhsinform.scot/illnesses-and-conditions/injuries/skin-injuries/tick-bites>

<https://www.nhsinform.scot/healthy-living/outdoor-health/bugs-and-germs/avoiding-bugs-and-germs-outdoors>

NICE Lyme guidance: www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng95

Care homes Information

When a respiratory outbreak has been declared – A Quick reference Guide

- In the first instance, please refer to the up-to-date care home guidance found at; <https://publichealthscotland.scot/publications/covid-19-information-and-guidance-for-social-community-and-residential-care-settings/> and the National Infection Prevention Control Manual <https://www.nipcm.scot.nhs.uk/> Care Home IPCM.
- Only isolate symptomatic/positive resident cases (unless advised otherwise by HPT)
- Communal areas to remain open for residents and their visitors who are not in isolation
- Covid-19 and Influenza positive residents must remain in isolation for 5 days with day 0 being symptom onset. They must feel well and be fever free for 48 hours (without use of antipyretic medication such as Paracetamol) before exiting isolation.
- Positive resident cases do not need to be retested prior to coming out of isolation
- PCR test symptomatic residents (Consult partnership for obtaining PCR kits)
- Do not use LFT tests for testing symptomatic residents
- Do not use staff PCR testing specimen tubes for resident testing
- Do not test residents who do not have symptoms
- There is not a requirement for mass testing of residents – i.e. do not test the whole care home
- If PCR sample cannot be taken to GP/Microbiology labs on the same day- it can be stored for 24 hours and delivered the next day
- All staff and visitors to revert to wearing fluid repellent masks in all areas – extended use (Resident facing staff)
- Ensure appropriate PPE use and appropriately stored, guidance found at; <https://www.nipcm.hps.scot.nhs.uk/media/2098/2023-03-20-appendix-21-v10-final.pdf>
- Implement three named visitor initiative (one per day) and ALL essential visiting to continue
- Implement enhanced cleaning and encourage decluttering (Cleaning and Disinfection)
- Implement Staff cohorting if possible
- Temporary reintroduction of physical distancing and ventilation within the care home setting
- Resident facing staff who were positive for COVID require two negative LFT tests that are 24 hours apart. The first LFD test should be taken 5 days following the day of symptom onset (day 0). If still positive at Day 11 and well, can return to work after a Risk Assessment with the manager, but not to care for immunosuppressed individuals

HPT will advise when to stop testing newly symptomatic residents and when to declare the outbreak over.

General Information



It is also important to remember that NHS Inform has a huge amount of information about a wide range of infections and has helpful guides if you or someone around you develop symptoms. Moreover, COVID-19 information is still on NHS Inform and is up to date including stay at home advice. If you're feeling anxious, stressed, low, having problems sleeping or dealing with grief, check out the Mind to Mind section to find out how you can improve your mental wellbeing by hearing what others have found helpful.

Kindly refer to the websites below to access the most up-to-date information.

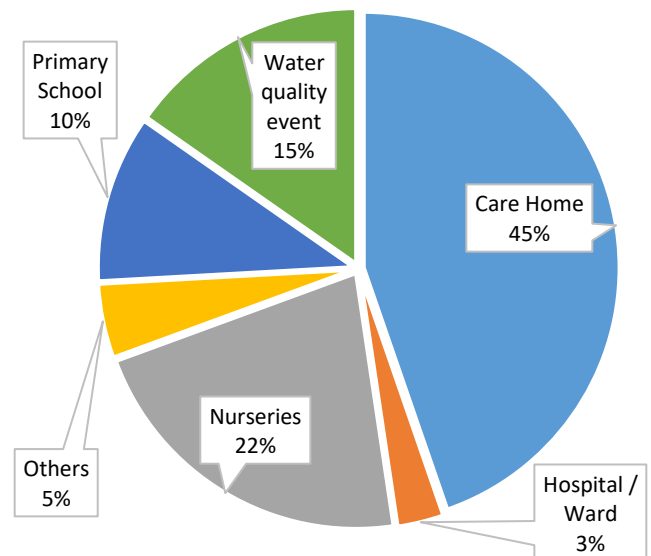
NHS Inform; <https://www.nhsinform.scot/>

NHS Inform COVID-19 information;
<https://www.nhsinform.scot/illnesses-and-conditions/infections-and-poisoning/coronavirus-covid-19>

Healthy know how;
<https://www.nhsinform.scot/campaigns/healthy-know-how>

Mind to Mind; <https://www.nhsinform.scot/mind-to-mind/>

Situations and Outbreaks



A summary of all the outbreak and/or situations managed by the health protection team in the first quarter of 2023 is presented above in terms of settings.

Is there something we should know?



We welcome your input for topics to cover or news to share as we are always working to improve our communication. If you think there is a topic we should be covering or have a piece to contribute, kindly let us know by leaving us your suggestions via the HPT email.

Get in touch

NHS Grampian Health Protection Team.
Address: Summerfield House, 2 Eday Road, Aberdeen.
Phone: 01224 558520
Email: gram.healthprotection@nhs.scot