

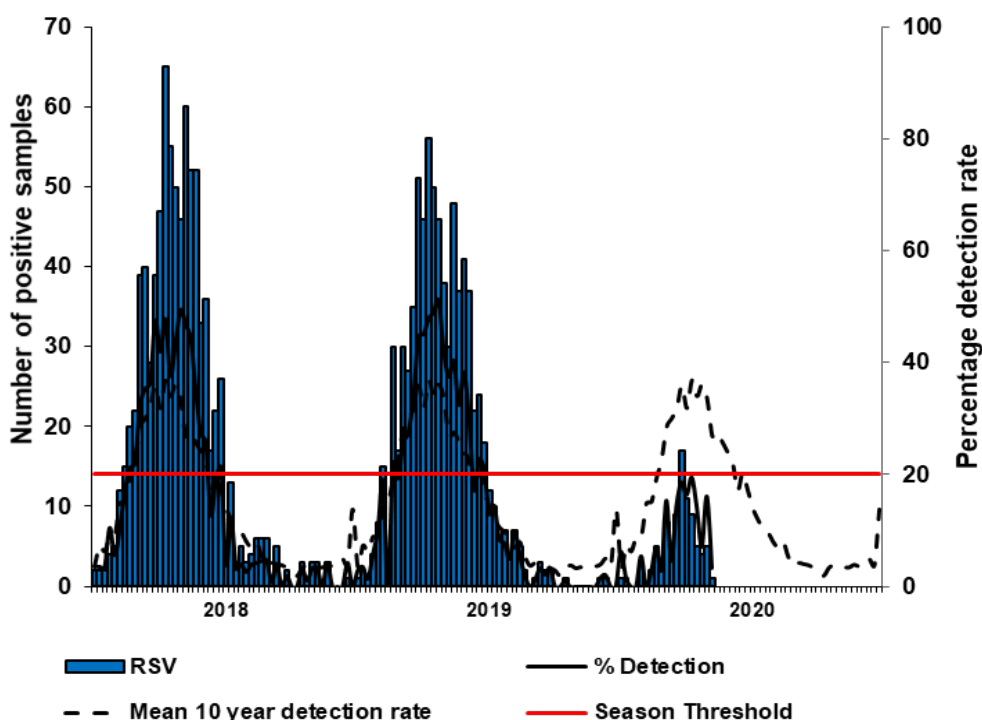
**SEASONAL DISEASES**

## Respiratory syncytial virus and influenza seasons, 2020

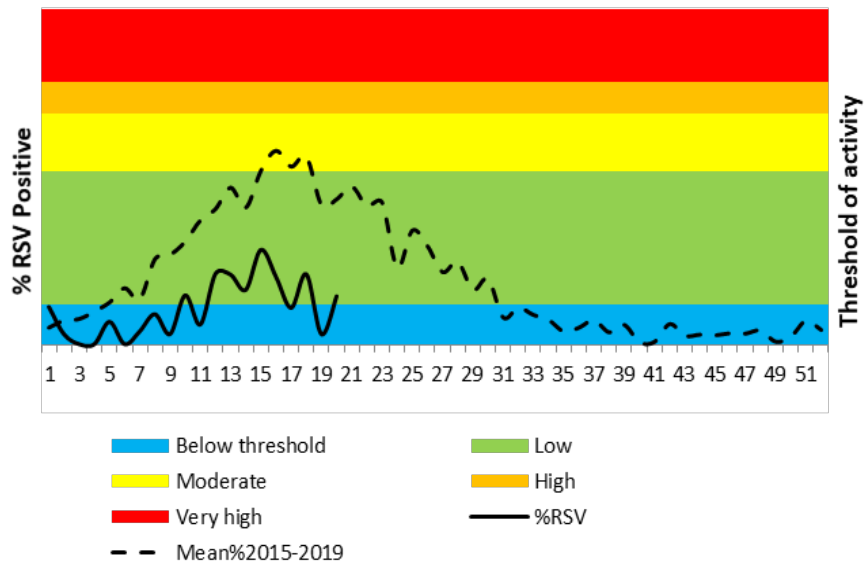
Over the past 10 years, the RSV season has preceded the influenza season and started between the beginning of February and mid-March, with the mean peak of the season in mid-April. The number of specimens received this year through the pneumonia surveillance programme has been lower than the 2010-2019 mean per week, since the week starting 30 March. The number of RSV positive specimens started increasing in the week beginning 23 March, but has since declined. The detection rate of RSV has remained below the seasonal threshold using the Moving Epidemic Method (MEM) – a sequential analysis using the R Language – to calculate the duration, start and end of the annual epidemic (Figure 3). Each year the majority of RSV positive results are from children under the age of 5 years. To date, this year 91/93 (98%) positive RSV results in the pneumonia surveillance programme

were from children aged <5 years. In this age group the detection rate rose above the seasonal threshold in week 12, but remains lower than the 10 year mean (Figure 4).

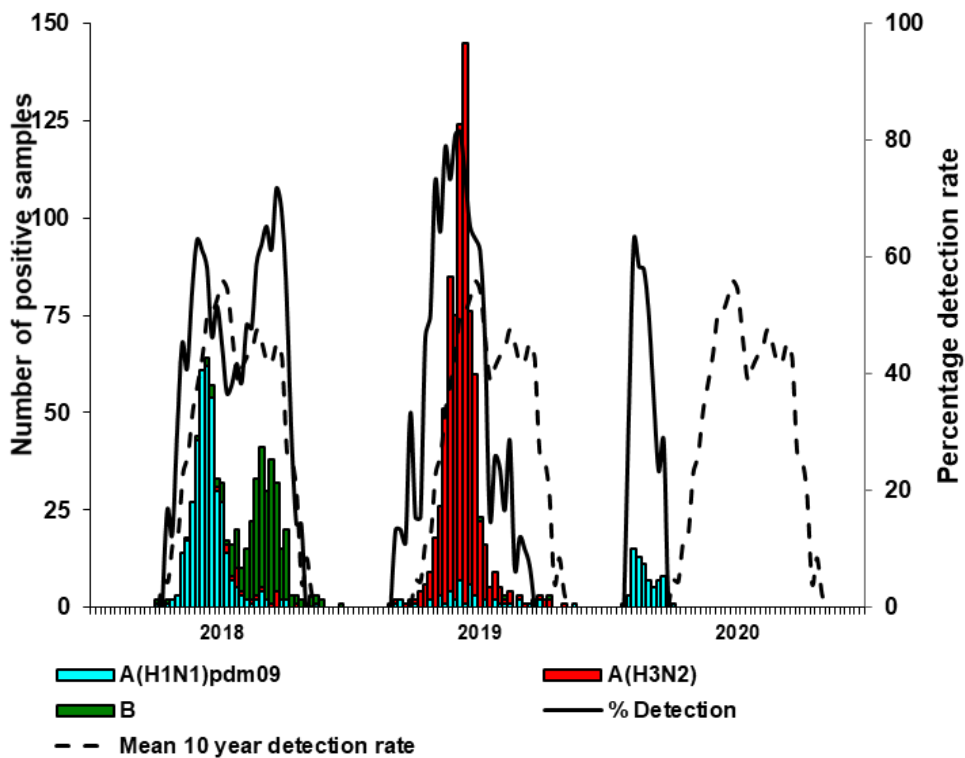
The influenza season occurs mainly during the winter months of May to August with the season starting as early as April or as late as July. The 2020 influenza season has not yet started although there has been a localised outbreak of influenza A(H1N1)pdm09 and influenza B Victoria in the Western Cape Province, which started at the end of January and ended in the first week of April. In the past 36 years there has not been an outbreak during the inter-seasonal period (November to March). Over the past 10 years the mean week of onset has been the second week of May, and the peak in the first week of July (Figure 5).



**Figure 3.** Pneumonia surveillance: RSV detections and detection rate 2018 – 2020.



**Figure 4.** Pneumonia surveillance: 2020 RSV detection rate in children under five years of age and RSV transmission threshold.



**Figure 5.** Viral Watch: Number positive for influenza and influenza types and subtypes and detection rate by year, 2018-2020.

**Article source:** Centre for Respiratory Diseases and Meningitis, NICD-NHLS; [cheryl@nicd.ac.za](mailto:cheryl@nicd.ac.za)