

Disease outbreaks

Oregon state and local health departments investigated 256 acute and communicable disease outbreaks in 2014, down from 304 in 2013 (a 16% decrease). Fifty-four percent (138) of these were outbreaks of calicivirus gastroenteritis. Twenty-four outbreaks were foodborne, 33 were respiratory, four were due to animal contact, and three were waterborne. The mode of transmission was undetermined in 57 outbreaks. Sharing of respiratory secretions caused outbreaks of influenza (12) and pertussis (8) and two outbreaks of chickenpox (varicella) can be considered airborne. Foods contaminated with a variety of salmonellae made folks ill at a variety of venues. Almost every outbreak reinforces the tried-and-true public health mantras of “wash your hands” and “cover your cough.”

Gastroenteritis is by far the most commonly reported type of outbreak in Oregon, accounting for 211 (82%) of the 256 outbreaks investigated in 2014.

Thanks to rigorous specimen collection by local health investigators, 112 of these outbreaks were confirmed. Sixty-nine percent of gastroenteritis outbreaks had disease-causing agents identified, mostly caliciviruses (norovirus and sapovirus). The Oregon State Public Health Laboratory (OSPHL) now routinely tests for sapovirus, astrovirus and rotavirus when stool specimens are norovirus-negative.

Disease outbreaks, by etiology: Oregon, 2014

