

# Disease outbreaks

Oregon state and local health departments investigated 349 acute and communicable disease outbreaks in 2018, down 15% from 409 in 2017. Thirty percent (104) of these were outbreaks of calicivirus gastroenteritis. Twenty-seven outbreaks were foodborne, 137 were respiratory, 116 were due to person-to-person transmission, two were due to animal contact, one was waterborne, and four were the result of some other mode of transmission. The mode of transmission was undetermined in 62 outbreaks. Sharing of respiratory secretions caused outbreaks of influenza (100), pertussis (12), respiratory syncytial virus (10) and measles (2).

Foods contaminated with a variety of *Salmonella* and *Escherichia coli* 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 176 (50%) of outbreaks investigated in 2018. Of note, in 2018, influenza-like illness was a close second, accounting for 29% (100) of all outbreaks.

Thanks to rigorous specimen collection by local health investigators, 227 (65%) of all outbreaks recorded in 2018 were confirmed. Sixty-six percent (117/176) of gastroenteritis outbreaks had disease-causing agents identified, mostly caliciviruses (norovirus and sapovirus). The Oregon State Public Health Laboratory (OSPHL) routinely tests for sapovirus, astrovirus and rotavirus when stool specimens are norovirus-negative.

