

Disease outbreaks

Oregon state and local health departments investigated 408 acute and communicable disease outbreaks in 2017, up 35% from 303 in 2016. Thirty-five percent (143) of these were outbreaks of calicivirus gastroenteritis. Twenty-three outbreaks were foodborne, 184 were respiratory and one was due to animal contact. The mode of transmission was undetermined in 104 outbreaks. Sharing of respiratory secretions caused outbreaks of influenza (152), pertussis (13), respiratory syncytial virus (4) and mumps (2). One outbreak of chickenpox (varicella) can be considered airborne.

Foods contaminated with a variety of *Salmonella* 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 (52%) of outbreaks investigated in 2017. Of note, in 2017, influenza-like illness was a close second, accounting for 37% (152) of all outbreaks.

Thanks to rigorous specimen collection by local health investigators, 280 of these outbreaks were confirmed. Eighty-two percent (117/143) 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.

Disease outbreaks, by etiology: Oregon, 2017

