

Wastewater Surveillance

Frequently Asked Questions

What is wastewater surveillance?

Wastewater surveillance is a community-level approach to sampling and testing raw wastewater for pathogens that enter sewer systems through human waste. Wastewater samples are taken before wastewater is treated. Samples are then processed to test for diseases that may be circulating in a community. Test results are analyzed to detect trends and inform public health action.

How is wastewater surveillance beneficial to public health?

Wastewater surveillance can provide an early warning signal that disease is spreading in a community. Pathogens in wastewater can be shed by persons who may have no symptoms or before they develop symptoms. Public health agencies can then prompt community members to take extra precautions to help prevent illness for themselves and their families.

What types of sites are participating in the program?

Municipal and regional wastewater treatment plants, as well as institutes of higher education currently participate in the NJDOH Wastewater Surveillance Program.

Are areas that are not linked to city water systems represented in the program?

Testing is not conducted on dwellings or buildings that utilize a septic system. However, individuals that reside in areas serviced by septic systems may travel to locations for work or school and be represented in sample testing from participating locations.

Can sites still enroll in the NJDOH Wastewater Surveillance Program?

Yes, sites interested in enrolling or receiving additional information can email the Wastewater Surveillance Team at CDS.WWS@doh.nj.gov.

How many times per week are samples tested?

Samples are collected and tested two times per week. Occasionally this cadence may change due to holidays or other circumstances.

Where are samples tested?

Samples are tested at New Jersey Public Health and Environmental Laboratories (PHEL).

How are wastewater samples processed and tested?

You can find information on how wastewater samples are processed and tested by visiting the [PHEL Wastewater Surveillance webpage](#) to learn more.

Are NJDOH wastewater testing results posted publicly?

Yes, results are posted publicly while maintaining confidentiality of site names. You can find the results by navigating to:

For information on SARS-CoV2 levels in wastewater:

- CDC NWSS state trends: [Click here](#)
- CDC NWSS site-specific metrics: [Click here](#)

For information on Mpox levels in wastewater: [Click here](#)

For information on Influenza A virus levels in wastewater: [Click here](#)

Where can I get more information?

- The NJ Department of Health <https://www.nj.gov/cd/topics/wastewater.shtml>
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention <https://www.cdc.gov/nwss/wastewater-surveillance.html>

This information is intended for educational purposes only. Adapted from Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.