

Dysentery cases on rise in Portland

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USA TODAY

An uptick in dysentery, the diarrhea-inducing disease often associated with frontier times past, is on the rise in the Portland, Oregon, metro area, according to new health data.

First reported by local outlets KOIN and The Oregonian, the increase in cases of the contagious gastrointestinal condition was reflected in new health data shared by the Multnomah County Health Department, which reported 40 cases in January. Portland is the county seat of Multnomah.

Known for causing stomach cramps, vomiting, bloody diarrhea and fever, dysentery has been consistently on the rise in the Portland region year-over-year since 2012, officials told KOIN.

Data released by the health department showed several spikes in cases between 2017 and 2024, though last year's infection number of 158 in Multnomah County blew past years out of the water. That end-of-the-year number likewise represented a 62-case increase between 2024 and 2023 (96 infections.)

The Multnomah County Health Department did not immediately respond to request for comment.

The dysentery infection currently spreading most prominently among Multnomah County is shigellosis, the most common form of dysentery infection caused by the shigella bacteria.

Data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention shows that in the U.S., approximately half a million people per year become infected with shigellosis.

In the Portland area, health officials said 56% of cases were among people experiencing homelessness and 55% of cases reported methamphetamine and/or opiate usage.

The rising rate of people with unstable housing situations in the metro area – and therefore less access to plumbing and other hygiene needs – has likely been a major contributor to the spread, something the city previously tried to address by maintaining public toilets near areas with a high unhoused population.

The local health department is working to provide temporary housing for those who do test positive, both local outlets reported.

There are two main types of dysentery, according to the Cleveland Clinic. The first type is amoebic dysentery (amoebiasis), which is caused by a parasite, most commonly one called Entamoeba histolytica. People in the U.S. are more likely to become infected with this form of dysentery if they recently traveled to a country with poorer water sanitation.

The second type, Bacillary dysentery, is caused by a bacterial infection and is the most common type of dysentery. Some of the most common bacteria that cause this form of dysentery include shigella, salmonella, campylobacter and E. coli.



Handwashing is one of the most effective ways to curb the spread of dysentery. GETTY IMAGES

The most common form is dysentery caused by the shigella bacteria, in which case the infection is called shigellosis.

Dysentery of any kind is most often spread via the ingestion of food or water that has been handled by an infected person. Because it spreads through trace fecal particles, unwashed hands are often the culprit for the spread.

Some major symptoms, like diarrhea, are consistent across infection types. Some dysentery symptoms, however, depend on whether you have a parasitic or bacterial infection, according to the Cleveland Clinic.

Amoebic dysentery

Most people who have amoebic dysentery don't have any symptoms, and they can take two to four weeks after infection to appear. However, if symptoms do occur and include diarrhea, blood in stool, nausea, vomiting, weight loss, upset stomach and dehydration.

In rare cases, an abscess may form as a result of parasite moving.

Bacillary dysentery

Symptoms of bacillary dysentery often occur one to three days after infection and may include diarrhea containing blood or mucus, high fever, nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain and dehydration.

In severe cases, it may cause extreme inflammation, widening (dilation) of your large intestine and acute kidney disease.

Dysentery not only is highly contagious but can and does result in death.

In fact, diarrheal disease, which includes dysentery and cholera, is the third-leading cause of death in children under 5 worldwide and is responsible for killing around 443,832 children every year, according to the World Health Organization.

Most people can recover on their own with basic care like drinking plenty of water within seven to 14 days. Certain groups of people are more prone to developing severe cases of dysentery, including young children, people 50 years of age and older, and people who have dehydration or malnutrition.

Practicing good hygiene is the best way to prevent contracting or spreading dysentery. Thoroughly washing your hands with soap and running water after using the bathroom and before and after handling or eating food is the surest way to stay safe.

Other ways to prevent dysentery, according to the Cleveland Clinic:

- Don't share personal items with other people, including toothbrushes, drinking glasses and towels.
 - Don't use water unless you're sure it's sanitized or sterile (free of germs). This includes water for drinking, cooking and brushing your teeth.
 - Wash all fruits and vegetables with clean running water. Peel them before eating them.
 - Thoroughly cook all food.
 - If you're traveling to an area where dysentery is common, avoid ice cubes, fountain drinks, water or soft drinks that aren't in a sealed container and unpasteurized dairy and juice products.
- If you end up contracting dysentery, you can avoid spreading it to others:
- Avoid other people.
 - Do not have sexual contact with anyone.
 - Don't prepare food for other people.
 - Don't swim.
 - Regularly clean toilets, sinks and door handles with disinfecting products.
 - Wash your laundry in hot water at temperatures at least 130°F.

If you end up with an amoebic infection, a medical professional will prescribe medication. Otherwise, supportive care is generally used, such as IV fluids for dehydration, antibiotics to assist with infection symptoms, anti-nausea medications and, if needed, blood transfusions.

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ST. LUCIE COUNTY PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION PUBLIC HEARING AGENDA

March 20, 2025

NOTICE OF A PROPOSED AMENDMENT TO THE OFFICIAL ZONING ATLAS AND PRELIMINARY PUD SITE PLAN.

The St. Lucie County Planning and Zoning Commission is scheduled to review and act upon the following proposal for adoption by Resolution:

RESOLUTION

A RESOLUTION OF THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF ST. LUCIE COUNTY AMENDING THE OFFICIAL ZONING ATLAS FOR +/-32.92 ACRES OF LAND LOCATED ON THE NORTH SIDE OF DYER ROAD APPROXIMATELY 400 FEET EAST OF US HIGHWAY SOUTH FROM THE RF (RELIGIOUS FACILITIES) ZONING DISTRICT TO THE PUD (PLANNED UNIT DEVELOPMENT) ZONING DISTRICT AND APPROVING A PRELIMINARY PUD SITE PLAN TO BE KNOWN AS MERITAGE CALVARY PUD.

Petition Applicant/Owner: Calvary Assembly of God of PSL, Inc.
Petition Agent: Leah Heinzelmann, Cotteur & Hearing.
Petition File Numbers: PD-2403-000031.

Location: North side of Dyer Rd., approximately 400 feet east of US Highway 1 South (see map below).
Parcel ID #: 3414-501-0705-450-9

Purpose: Request to rezone +/-32.92 acres of land from RF (Religious Facilities) to PUD (Planned Unit Development), including an associated Preliminary PUD Site Plan for a townhome community with up to 159 dwelling units. The map below depicts the land proposed for rezoning.

