



Weekly Alert May 30th, 2024

## Wastewater testing has strong public support despite limited knowledge

### *It's detecting a new COVID variant in sewer water*

A survey of 565 adults from five states found that most (58%) were aware that public health officials tested sewer water, but less than 10% said they knew a lot about it. In contrast, 61% said they knew little or nothing about it.

#### What is wastewater monitoring?

**Wastewater monitoring** helps communities detect and respond promptly to infectious disease outbreaks. People with infections can shed parts of a virus or bacteria when they use the toilet, take a shower, wash their hands, or even do laundry. Those virus or bacteria parts go down the drain, through the pipes, into the sewer and on to a treatment plant. Before the sewer water is treated, samples are taken and tested in a lab. The amount of virus or bacteria found in the samples is a good indicator of whether and how much a disease has spread in the community.

#### Do Americans support wastewater monitoring?

After providing respondents with a brief description of how wastewater monitoring works, 82% said they support (42%) or strongly support (40%) using it to detect viruses or bacteria in a community. Only 3% opposed or strongly opposed it, and 15% neither supported nor opposed it.

#### How is wastewater monitoring being used?

Recently, the CDC detected new COVID-19 variants, known as FLiRT, using wastewater monitoring. Among survey respondents from Texas, 56% had heard about the new FLiRT variants in the last 7 days. In addition to COVID, wastewater is commonly monitored for flu, RSV and noroviruses.

#### Help Texas stay informed about wastewater monitoring.

Community organizations in Texas can share the resources below to build public knowledge about wastewater monitoring.

## Survey information

This week's report is based on responses from a panel of adult residents of Texas (n = 73), St. Louis, MO (n = 149), Baltimore, MD (n = 168), Omaha, NE (n = 82) and Colorado (n = 94) surveyed May 25-27, 2024. Explore these data and more at [iHeard Texas](#).

## Shareable Resources

Click to download resources to share in your community.  
Remember to include **#iHeardTexas** **#iHeardTX** when sharing on social media!

### Using Wastewater to Detect Diseases



*Suggested caption:*

82% of respondents expressed their support for using wastewater monitoring to detect viruses or bacteria in the community.

**#iHeardTexas** **#WastewaterMonitoring** **#CommunitySupport**

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## What is wastewater monitoring?

# What is wastewater monitoring?



Wastewater monitoring helps communities detect when infectious diseases might be spreading.



Source: CDC

**1** Max and a few others in their community get sick with the flu.

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**2** Like everyone else, Max uses the toilet, takes a shower and does laundry.

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**3** Pieces of the flu virus travel through the drains and pipes in Max's home, eventually reaching the sewer system.

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**4** Before treating the wastewater, health officials collect samples for lab testing.

**5** Scientists examine the wastewater samples for viruses and bacteria, then share what they find with public health officials.

iHeard Texas

**6** Public health officials track how the flu and other illnesses spread in Max's community and use data to share testing resources or safety tips.

*Suggested caption:*

Wastewater monitoring helps find infectious disease outbreaks. □□ When people have infections, virus and bacteria fragments enter the sewer system. Before treatment, samples are taken and tested in labs to find disease spread in a community □□

#iHeardTexas #WastewaterMonitoring #CommunityHealth

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## Don't FLiRT with COVID

COVID-19  
iHeard Texas

### Don't flirt with FLiRT!

A new COVID-19 variant family called FLiRT was recently found. Use these strategies to reduce spread:



Stay up to date with COVID-19 vaccines



Practice good hygiene actions



Improve air flow



Mask as needed

Source: CDC

*Suggested caption:*

Stay safe, Texas! With a new COVID-19 variant family emerging called FLiRT, it's important to keep practicing safety measures. Together, we can keep our community healthy! 🇺🇸

#iHeardTexas #COVID19 #StaySafe #HealthMatters

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## Combined Resource

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