

Gastrointestinal (GI) Illness Regional Report Talking Points

Per the Virginia Regulations for Disease Reporting and Control, [Title 12 VAC 5-90-80](#), all outbreaks, including those caused by norovirus, are required to be reported to the Virginia Department of Health (VDH). Sporadic cases of norovirus infection (i.e., those not associated with an outbreak) are not reportable in Virginia. Norovirus outbreaks are known to increase in winter months with “norovirus season” typically recognized as lasting approximately from November through April. For more information about norovirus infection, please refer to the [VDH Norovirus Infection Fact Sheet](#).

- The regional GI illness report provides statewide and region-specific data about GI illness activity prior to and during norovirus season to local, regional, and state public health partners.
- The report combines emergency department and urgent care visit data, from the VDH Electronic Surveillance System for the Early Notification of Community-based Epidemics (ESSENCE), with outbreak data, from the Virginia Outbreak Surveillance System (VOSS).
- The report will be updated weekly, on Monday morning, and will be available on the VDH Foodborne Diseases [webpage](#).

ED and Urgent Care Data (ESSENCE)

- The VDH Enhanced Surveillance team monitors gastrointestinal (GI) illness activity using emergency department (ED) and urgent care visit data from ESSENCE.
- Each year in July, an annual statewide GI illness threshold is calculated. When ESSENCE GI visits cross the seasonal threshold, this indicates an increase in norovirus activity and the beginning of norovirus season.
- The GI illness threshold for 2024 was calculated using data from 2021 to 2023. When calculating the threshold, VDH identifies the consecutive 11-week period of each year with the lowest average percent of GI illness visits at emergency departments and urgent care facilities. The baseline is calculated as the average of the combined 33 weeks (11 weeks from each year). The threshold is calculated as the baseline plus two standard deviations.
 - Since GI illness activity may vary across the Commonwealth, regional thresholds for monitoring norovirus trends are also calculated to capture geographic variation.

Outbreak Data (VOSS)

- VOSS is the surveillance system used to report, track, and manage outbreak investigations of reportable diseases or other health conditions in Virginia.

- Norovirus and unknown viral GI illness outbreaks reported in VOSS are included in this report. Out of state outbreaks, clusters, and surveillance events are not included.
- Outbreaks are reported by the Earliest Outbreak Report Date. Sometimes there are delays in reporting between facilities and VDH.
- Data are subject to change as additional reports are received.