

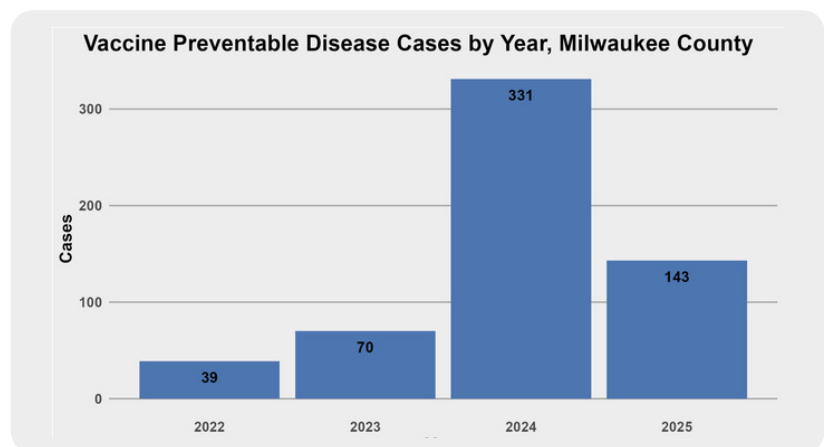
The City of Milwaukee Health Department (MHD) monitors infectious diseases across Milwaukee County. Infectious disease monitoring allows MHD to do case investigations, communicate with healthcare providers, and better understand what is going on in our community.

The Communicable Disease Summary Report reviews all communicable disease data from the previous year and provides context for the changes in trends we are observing in Milwaukee County. This report will be updated on an annual basis. For more current data, visit [MHD's Disease Statistics website](#) to view the Communicable Disease Dashboard or sign up to receive weekly Respiratory Illness Reports.

Vaccine Preventable Diseases

Vaccine preventable diseases refers to infections that have a vaccine available.

In the United States, the commonly followed routine vaccine schedule recommends vaccination against diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis (whooping cough), Haemophilus influenzae, measles, mumps, rubella, pneumococcal disease, polio, and varicella (chickenpox).



During the COVID-19 pandemic, many children fell behind on their routine vaccinations, leaving Milwaukee at risk for preventable disease outbreaks. In 2025, the United States had the largest numbers of measles cases since the disease was eliminated in 2000. The increase in cases nationally was linked to unvaccinated people, underscoring the importance of maintaining high vaccine coverage. Fortunately, there were no cases of measles in Milwaukee in 2025. However, in winter of 2024-2025, Milwaukee was hit by a large outbreak of whooping cough - another illness that is vaccine preventable. Whooping cough cases made up 62% of all vaccine preventable disease cases in Milwaukee County in 2025 and 83% in 2024.

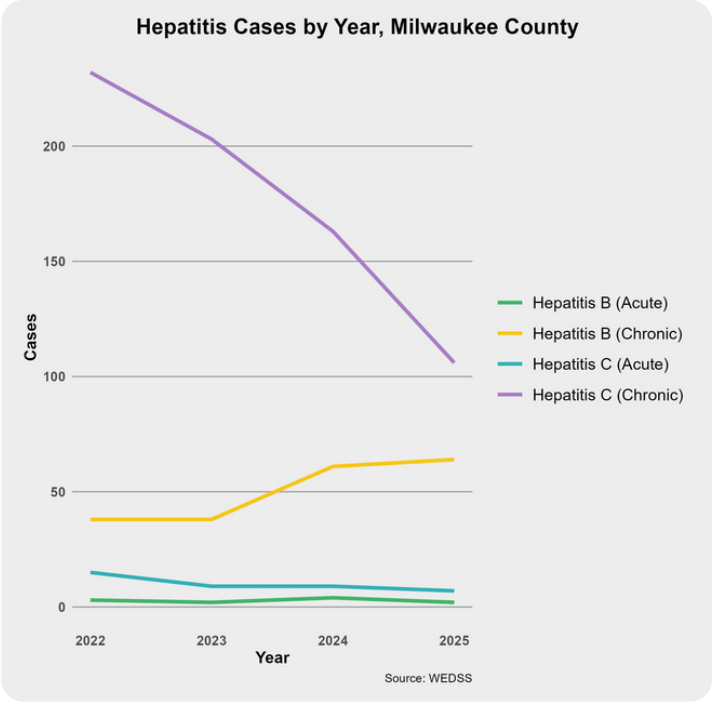
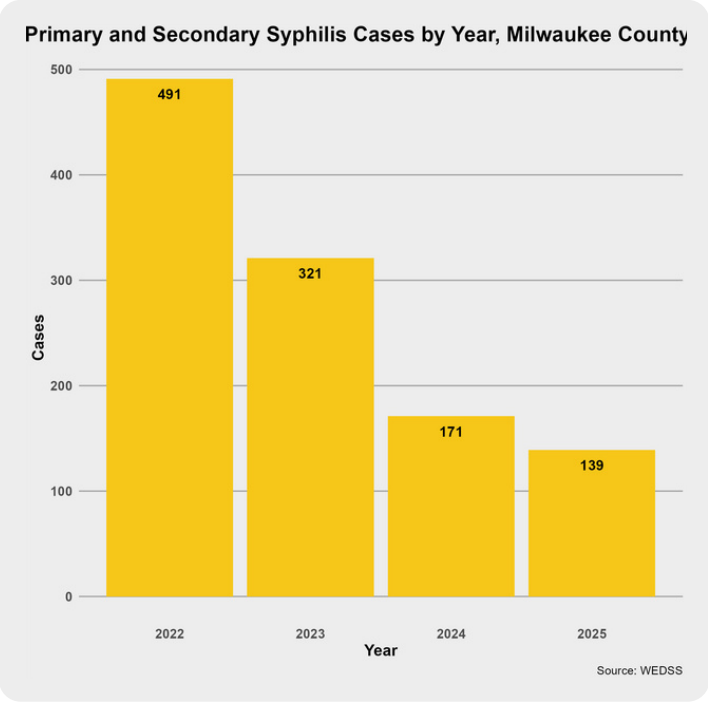
Sexually Transmitted Infections and Blood Borne Pathogens

Sexually transmitted infections (STIs) can be spread through many kinds of sexual contact or through other bodily fluids such as blood. Blood borne pathogens are often spread through sharing of needles or accidental needle exposure. Barrier contraception, like condoms, and safer injection supplies reduce your chances of becoming infected with an STI or blood borne pathogen.

Syphilis is a treatable STI with four stages: primary, secondary, latent, and tertiary. People are most contagious during the primary and secondary stages, so these are the stages most often used to track trends in syphilis infections. Since 2020, syphilis cases have increased sharply nationwide. Within Milwaukee County, primary and secondary syphilis cases more than doubled from 2020-2021. After peaking in 2021, case counts have steadily declined and are now approaching pre-pandemic levels. In 2025 there were less primary and secondary syphilis cases than in 2020.

Syphilis can also be transmitted to babies during pregnancy, leading to congenital syphilis in newborns. To address rising cases in congenital syphilis, the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists now recommends that pregnant individuals be tested three times during pregnancy to prevent congenital infections.

The World Health Organization, US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and Wisconsin Department of Health Services have a goal to eliminate viral hepatitis by 2030. To learn more about Wisconsin’s plan and progress in Hepatitis elimination, [visit their dashboard](#)

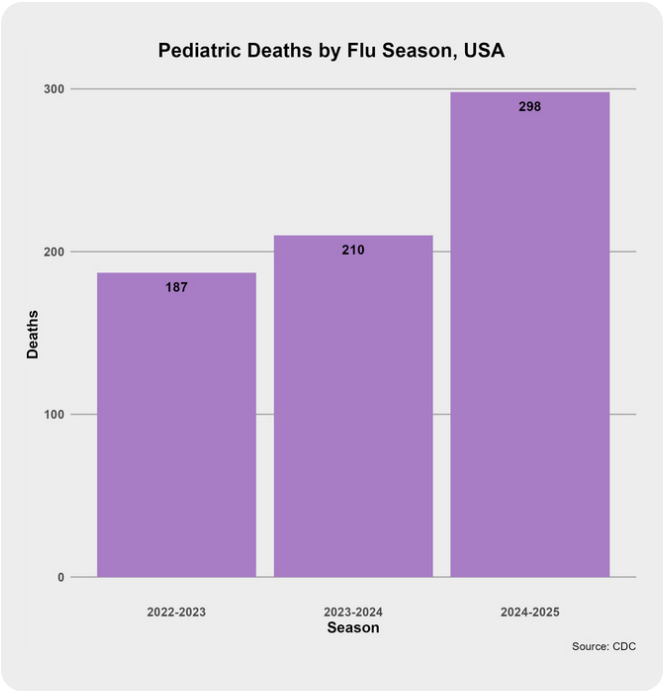


Respiratory Illnesses

Respiratory illnesses are infections that spread by inhaling viruses or bacteria. These infections typically cause coughing, sneezing, congestion, fever, and fatigue. Respiratory illnesses are spread more commonly during the winter months.

In the United States, 2024-2025 flu season was one of the worst in recent history. The 2024-2025 flu season had the most pediatric deaths from influenza nationally since the condition became reportable in 2004. Each year, the composition of the flu shot changes slightly to adjust for changes to the flu virus that happen naturally over time – these changes are called mutations. Because the flu virus mutates quickly, some years the virus evades protection provided by flu shots. The influenza A(H3N2) strain that spread during the 2024-2025 flu season was able to evade the flu shot which may have increased the severity of the flu season¹.

While there were no pediatric deaths from the flu in Milwaukee County, there were almost twice as many hospitalizations across all ages than the two previous flu seasons. This reflects the broader trend during a high severity flu season.



Gastrointestinal Diseases

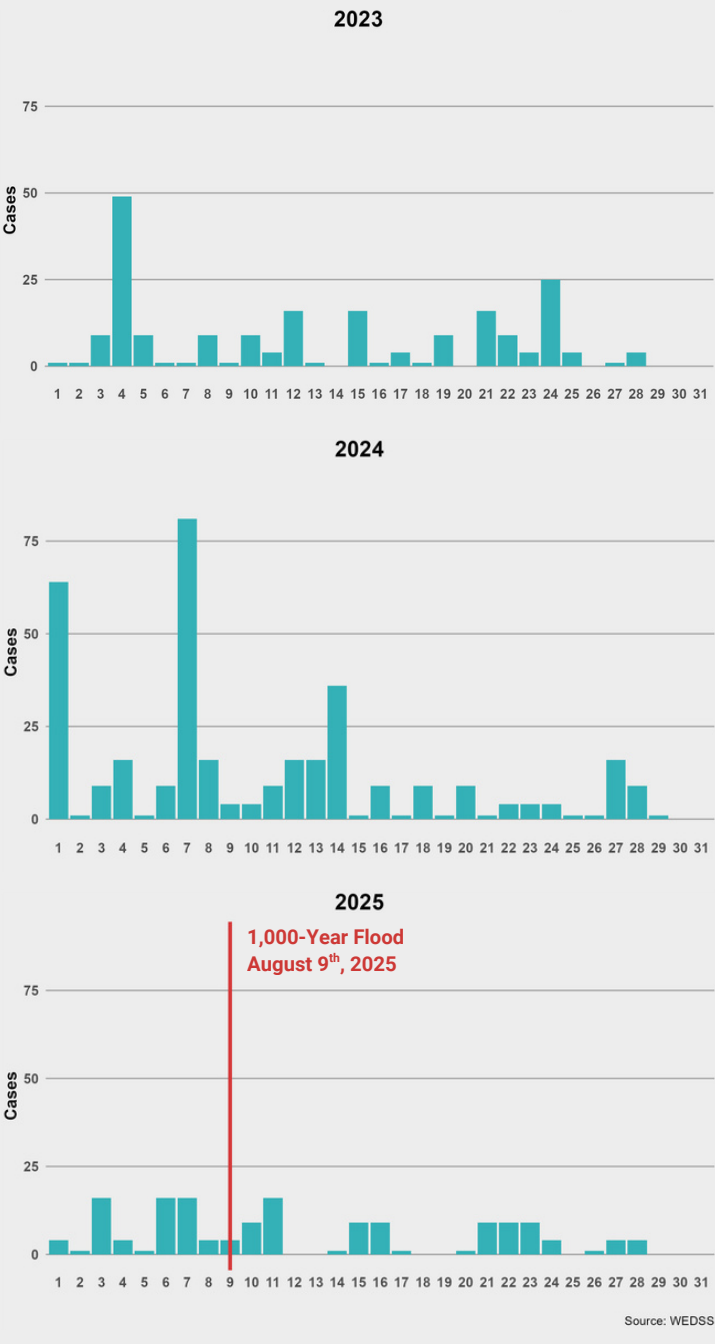
Gastrointestinal (GI) diseases occur when bacteria, viruses, or parasites get into your GI tract. During infections, people often experience fever, diarrhea, vomiting, abdominal cramps, and nausea. GI diseases are relatively common and are often referred to as food poisoning.

In 2025, there were no significant changes to GI disease levels in Milwaukee County.

In August of 2025, Milwaukee experienced a rare 1,000-year flood that overwhelmed the county. During intense flooding events, drinking water sources can be contaminated and untreated sewage may enter peoples homes. Both of these factors put people at risk of developing a GI disease. As part of a larger emergency response to the August flooding, MHD closely tracked GI diseases to see if flooding increased the presence of illness throughout the county.

In comparing to the levels of disease from August of 2023 and 2024, there did not appear to be any significant increase in GI diseases related to the historic flood.

GI Diseases in August, Milwaukee County



Vector Borne Diseases

Vector-borne diseases happen when people are bit by a bug or tick that is infected. In the United States, Lyme's Disease, spread by ticks, is the most common vector-born disease.

Vector-borne diseases have a seasonality to them with higher levels of disease spread during the summer months and low levels of spread during the winter months. Compared to the last 3 summers, the summer of 2025 saw the lowest levels of Lyme's disease in Milwaukee County in recent years.

In Wisconsin, the last few years have had increased activity of West Nile Virus – a disease spread by mosquitos. Within Milwaukee County, there were only two cases of West Nile Virus during 2025.

1. Influenza Activity in the United States during the 2024-25 Season and Composition of the 2025-26 Influenza Vaccine (2025). Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Retrieved from: <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/whats-new/2025-2026-influenza-activity.html>