

What is a Communicable Disease?

A communicable disease, also known as an infectious or transmissible disease, is an illness resulting from a pathogenic (disease-causing) biological agent from a human or animal host. Communicable diseases can be asymptomatic (no symptoms) or severe and fatal. Transmission of communicable illness can be from direct physical contact with an infected host, intake of contaminated food, beverages, or water, contact with infected bodily fluids, contaminated inanimate objects, inhalation or a bite from an infected insect or tick.



Testing at Atwater Beach for waterborne diseases

What is the Health Department's Role in Tracking Communicable Disease?

The NSHD is required to respond to and follow up on all Category I and Category II communicable diseases. In 2016, the NSHD responded to 565 reportable suspect and probable disease incidents, a 23% increase from 2015. A total of 421 of these were confirmed cases.

Disease Investigations

In an outbreak investigation, the NSHD is responsible for identifying the source of the illness and working with facilities to implement control measures to prevent further spread of the virus or bacteria. NSHD personnel must:

- Interview confirmed, probable and suspect cases
- Coordinate collection and testing of laboratory specimens
- Inspect affected facilities
- Provide education to impacted individuals and healthcare providers caring for individuals
- Relay information to the public in a timely manner



Performing lab work at the Health Department

Incidence of Communicable Disease in the North Shore:

Table one shows the five diseases with the highest burden in the North Shore based on 2016 confirmed communicable disease incidence (new cases) and how they compare to cases reported in Milwaukee County as a whole.

Type of Disease	NS Rate per 10,000	2016 Milwaukee Co Rate per 10,000
1. Sexually Transmitted Infections	38.9	160.0
2. Hepatitis A, B, C	4.3	6.8
3. Food/Waterborne Diseases	6.3	6.4
4. Mycobacterium (Non-TB)	3.5	N/A
5. Influenza Hospitalizations	7.1	5.3

*2016 Disease data are preliminary

Table two shows the rate per 10,000 of confirmed, probable, and suspect communicable disease investigations in each of the seven jurisdictions of the North Shore in 2016. Communicable diseases affect all seven of our communities at comparable rates.

Communicable diseases pose a risk to our communities because they

Community	Rate per 10,000
Bayside	57.0
Brown Deer	116.7
Fox Point	80.6
Glendale	83.9
River Hills	68.9
Shorewood	63.8
Whitefish Bay	66.6

*2016 Disease data are preliminary

are easily and quickly spread throughout populations. It is the responsibility of the local health departments to prevent, identify, intervene, treat, and educate on communicable diseases in our communities.

Through disease tracking and surveillance, prevention and treatment, and education and awareness, the NSHD staff protects our community's health from communicable diseases.