

Outbreak Fact Sheet

What is an outbreak?

An outbreak is defined as more cases of disease in time or place than expected. If the condition is rare (i.e. foodborne botulism) or has serious public health implications (i.e. bioterrorism agent), an outbreak may involve only one case.

When is it considered laboratory-confirmed?

When two or more cases have the same laboratory diagnosis of the etiologic agent, the outbreak is considered laboratory-confirmed.

What is a Georgia outbreak?

If the exposure takes place inside the state, it's considered a Georgia outbreak.

Who is responsible for investigating Georgia outbreaks?

Georgia District Epidemiologists and Environmental Health Specialists are responsible for outbreak investigations involving Georgia residents regardless of the exposure location. Outbreaks involving residents from multiple states are usually coordinated by CDC.

What is a cluster?

A cluster is a group of cases in a certain place and time *suspected* to be greater than expected. Not all clusters are outbreaks but all clusters should be investigated thoroughly and rapidly to rule out an outbreak or to implement control measures.

What is a foodborne outbreak?

A foodborne outbreak is defined as two or more cases of a similar illness after ingestion of a common food or beverage *or* ingestion of food or beverages at a common meal or event. The definition of a laboratory-confirmed foodborne outbreak depends on the pathogen but usually requires two or more cases with the same laboratory diagnosis or identification of the etiologic agent in *epidemiologically* implicated food.

How are outbreaks reported?

Any cluster of illnesses regardless of etiology should be reported to the local or district health office immediately. Outbreaks may also be reported to Cindy Burnett, Outbreak Coordinator, Notifiable Diseases Epidemiology Section or Carrie Shuler, Medical Epidemiologist, Notifiable Diseases Epidemiology Section at 404-657-2588. After hours outbreaks can be reported to the Georgia Poison Control Center or 1-866-PUB-HLTH.