



48 Wisconsinites diagnosed with potentially deadly bacterial bloodstream infection



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The Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS), Division of Public Health (DPH) is currently investigating an outbreak of a potentially deadly bloodstream infection caused by bacteria called Elizabethkingia.

To date, 48 patients located in southeastern and southern Wisconsin have been diagnosed with the bacteria, 15 of whom have died. However, officials can't say if they died from the bacteria or an underlying medical issue.

According to DHS, cases have been reported in the following counties: Columbia, Dane, Dodge, Fond du Lac, Jefferson, Milwaukee, Ozaukee, Racine, Sauk, Washington, Sheboygan, and Waukesha.

Most of the patients are over the age of 65, according to State Health Officer Karen McKeown.

The illness usually affects people with compromised immune systems or serious underlying health conditions, she said.

DPH was first notified of six potential cases between Dec. 29, 2015 and Jan. 4, 2016 and set up statewide surveillance on Jan. 5, 2016.

“As soon as we were notified of the potential outbreak, Wisconsin’s disease detectives began working immediately to identify the source,” McKeown said. DPH then alerted health care providers, infection preventionists, and laboratories statewide of the presence of the Elizabethkingia bacteria, and provided information as well as treatment guidance, which has led to a rapid identification of cases, and appropriate treatment, she said.

“DHS and our partners are working closely on the investigation to determine the source of the bacteria, and are working diligently to contain the outbreak,” officials said.

A team of epidemiologists and laboratory partners from the federal [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](http://www.cdc.gov) (<http://wbay.com/2016/03/09/new-elizabethkingia-cases-confirmed-in-sheboygan-county/>) (CDC) is on site assisting with the investigation.

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