

Watauga County Communicable Disease Update

TRENDS, UPDATES & IMPORTANT POINTS

- On May 11, 2023, the public health emergency (PHE) declaration for COVID-19 ended.
- Respiratory virus tracking (including of COVID-19) remains important, and is highlighted through key measures that look at levels of virus found in wastewater, hospital capacity as measured through hospital admissions, and levels of severe illness in the community as measured through emergency department visits for respiratory viruses,
- In Watauga County in recent years, the number of people who contract Lyme disease has been the highest between the months of June and October.
 - Practice tick safety and prevention, know how to properly remove a tick, and remember that if you experience changes in your health following a tick bite to reach out to your doctor, or call our AppHealthCare Call Center at (828) 795-1970.

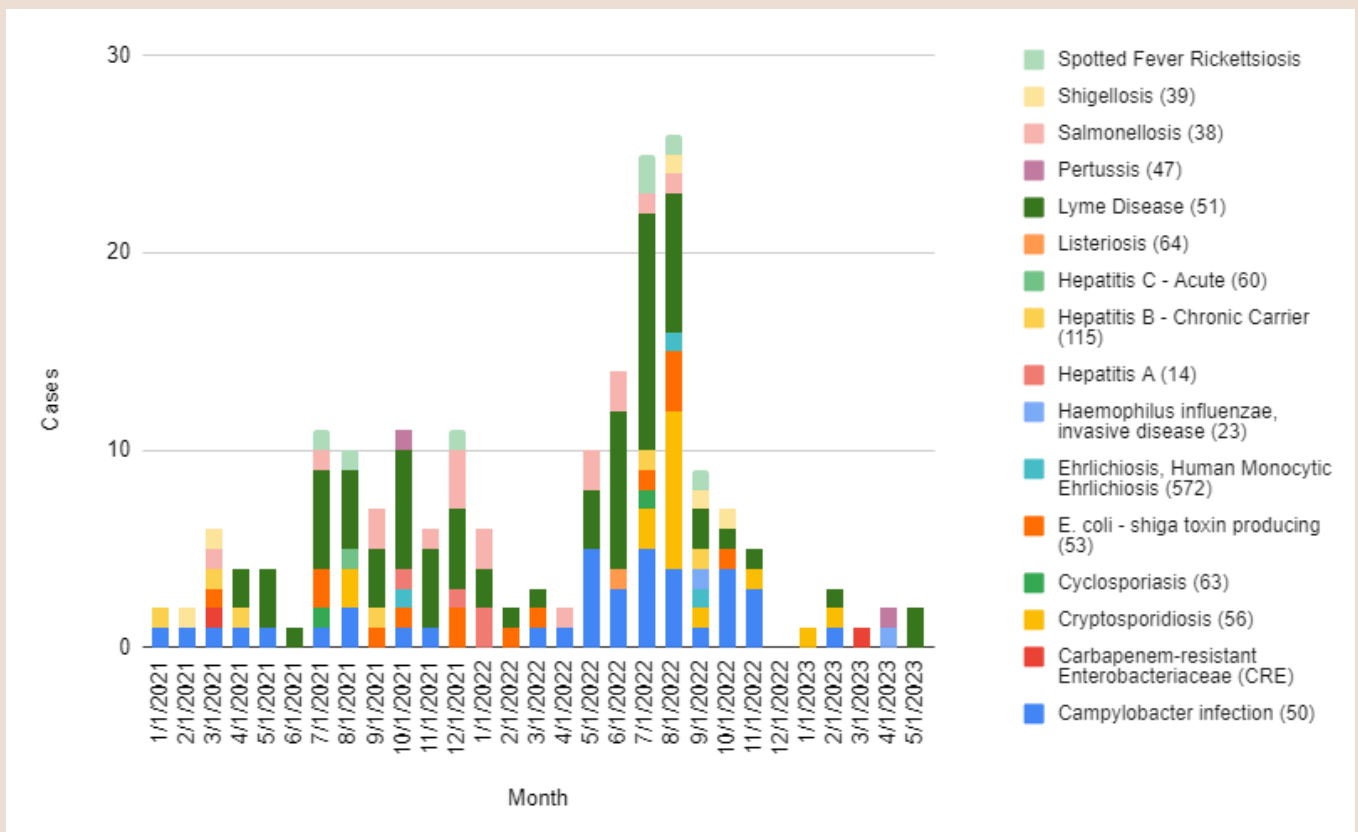
Watauga County General Communicable Disease Data

Data from the North Carolina Electronic Disease Surveillance System, accessed 6/1/2023

Communicable diseases are illnesses that spread from one person to another or from the environment to a person, including from animals, surfaces, food or water, respiratory droplets, bodily fluids, and bugs. Because communicable diseases can have so much impact on the population, the surveillance and control of such diseases is an important part of protecting the public's health.

The figures below represent reportable general communicable disease cases in residents of Watauga County by month, excluding COVID-19 and sexually transmitted infections.

COMMUNICABLE DISEASE CASES IN WATAUGA COUNTY BY MONTH



The data in recent months may be incomplete due to delays in testing and reporting.

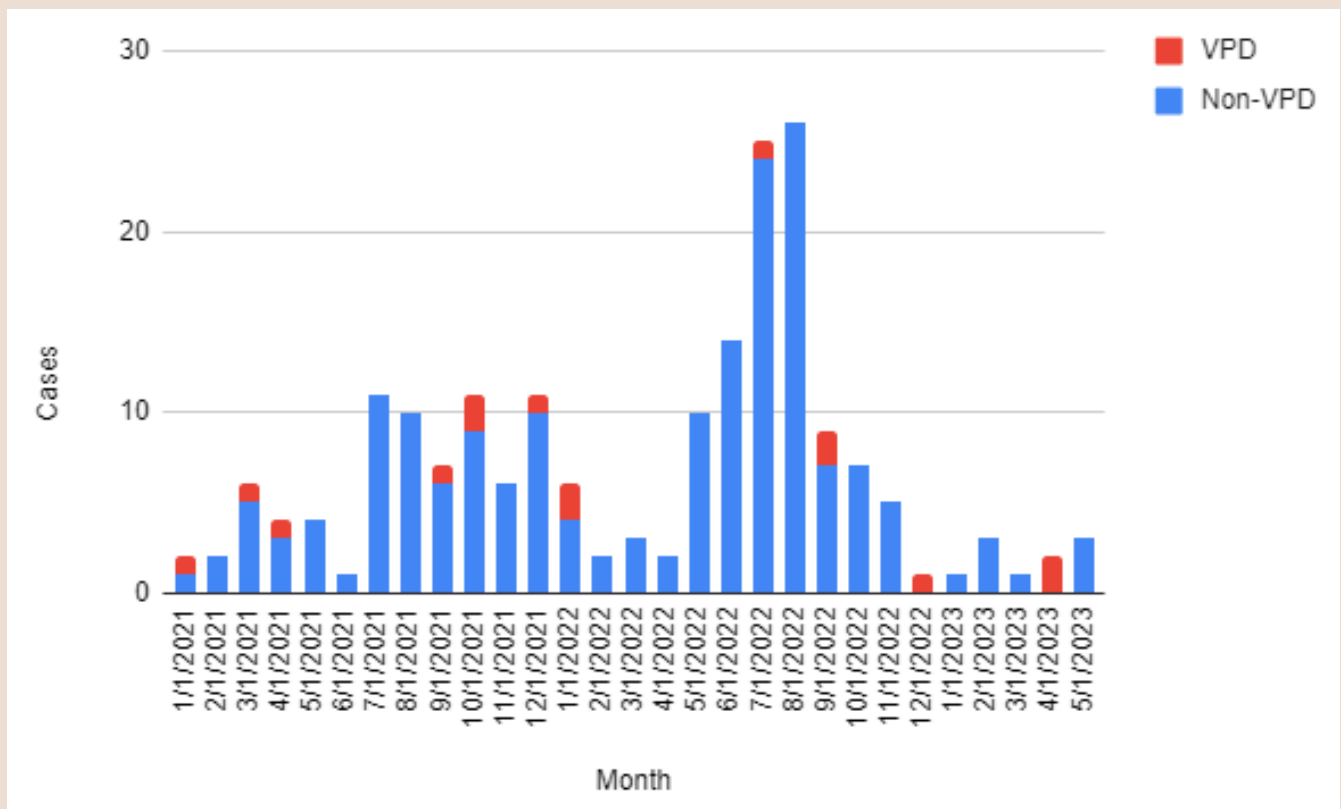
Watauga County Vaccine Preventable Disease Data

Data from the North Carolina Electronic Disease Surveillance System, accessed 6/1/2023

Vaccines prevent disease and disease transmission in the people who receive them and also in the broader community. Because of childhood vaccination programs, diseases like polio, measles, diphtheria, rubella, mumps, and tetanus are no longer widespread in the United States. However, cases and outbreaks of these diseases continue to occur due to travel to and from areas with lower vaccine coverage. Many diseases however are not preventable through vaccines, including but not limited to Lyme disease, rocky mountain spotted fever, and salmonella.

The figures below represent vaccine preventable disease (VPD) cases in residents of Watauga County by month, as compared to general non-VPD cases (excluding COVID-19 and sexually transmitted infections).

VACCINE PREVENTABLE DISEASE CASES IN WATAUGA COUNTY BY MONTH



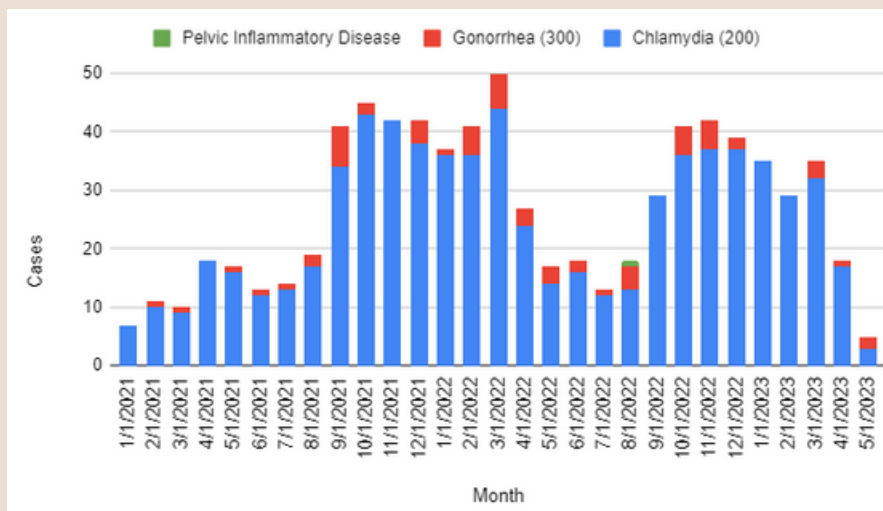
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Watauga County Sexually Transmitted Infection Data

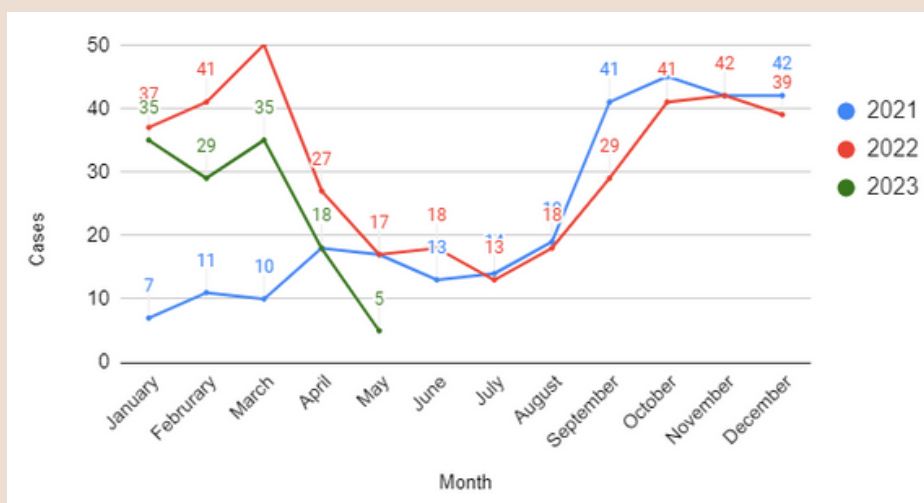
Data from the North Carolina Electronic Disease Surveillance System, accessed 6/1/2023

In North Carolina, there are eight reportable bacterial sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including gonorrhea, chlamydia, and pelvic inflammatory disease (PID). Chlamydia is the most prevalent STI in Watauga County, with gonorrhea as the second most prevalent. AppHealthCare provides clinical services, education and awareness efforts and monitoring disease trends through surveillance and epidemiology. To best prevent the spread of STIs, seek treatment if relevant, seek free routine testing, and take precautions to promote safety. The figures below represent STI cases in residents of Watauga County by month.

REPORTABLE SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTION CASES IN WATAUGA COUNTY BY TYPE AND MONTH



REPORTABLE SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTION CASES IN WATAUGA COUNTY BY YEAR



The data in recent months may be incomplete due to delays in testing and reporting.

Spotlight on Chlamydia in Watauga County

Individuals with chlamydia often do not show any symptoms. Chlamydia is a common and treatable STD that can cause permanent damage to female reproductive systems that can make it difficult or impossible to get pregnant later, and can complicate pregnancies.

Chlamydia Spread:

- Chlamydia can spread by people with or without symptoms. Asymptomatic chlamydia is common in individuals of all genders and can still have lasting harmful effects.
- Individuals with chlamydia should be treated, as should their sexual partners regardless of symptoms.
- Chlamydia can spread through vaginal, anal, or oral sex.

Preliminary data indicate that among Watauga County residents in 2022, individuals ages 20-24 had 6.96 times the risk (95% CI 5.61, 8.65) of getting chlamydia than the general population (ages 0-19 and 25+).

Chlamydia Testing and Screening:

- If you are sexually active, getting tested for STDs is one of the most important things you can do to protect your health. Make sure you have an open and honest conversation about your sexual history and STD testing with your doctor and ask whether you should be tested for STDs.
- All sexually active women younger than 25 years should be tested for gonorrhea and chlamydia every year. Women 25 years and older with risk factors such as new or multiple sex partners or a sex partner who has an STD should also be tested for gonorrhea and chlamydia every year.
- Everyone who is pregnant and may be at risk for infection should also be tested for chlamydia and gonorrhea starting early in pregnancy. Repeat testing may be needed in some cases.

North Carolina COVID-19 and Respiratory Surveillance Updates

Data from the CDC and NCDHHS, accessed 6/1/2023

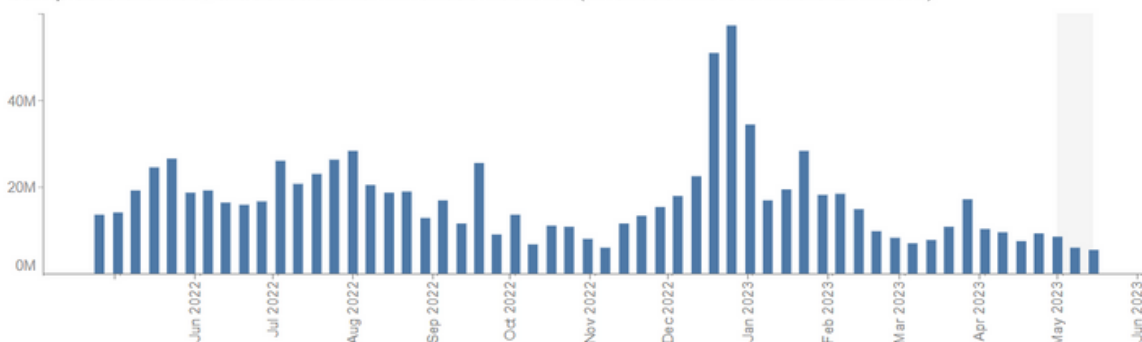
Watauga County COVID-19 Community Level:

LOW

STATE WASTEWATER SURVEILLANCE DATA

NCDHHS tracks the level of COVID-19 shed into wastewater. This metric provides a reliable population level picture of the amount of virus at the community level.

Latest Week: An average of **5.5 Million COVID-19 virus particles** per person were found in wastewater samples statewide, a **decrease** from the week before. (The week before was 6.2 Million.)

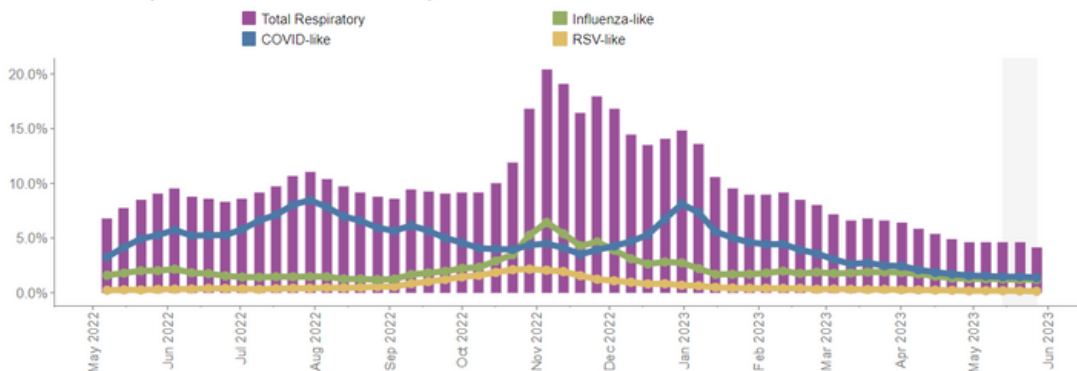


Average COVID-19 virus copies found per person per week from participating North Carolina wastewater treatment plants. COVID-19 virus particles appearing in wastewater can signal how quickly the virus is spreading, even if people don't get tested or have symptoms. Levels of influenza and RSV can also be measured in wastewater and may be included in the future. [More info](#)

EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT VISITS FOR RESPIRATORY VIRUS

This metric shows the percent of emergency department visits that are for symptoms or diagnoses of COVID-19, RSV, flu, and all acute respiratory illnesses combined. This metric provides an early indication of rising levels of respiratory illness in the community, and insight into the burden on local emergency departments.

Latest Week: **4.2% of emergency room visits** had symptoms of a respiratory virus, a **decrease** from the week before. (The week before was 4.6%.)



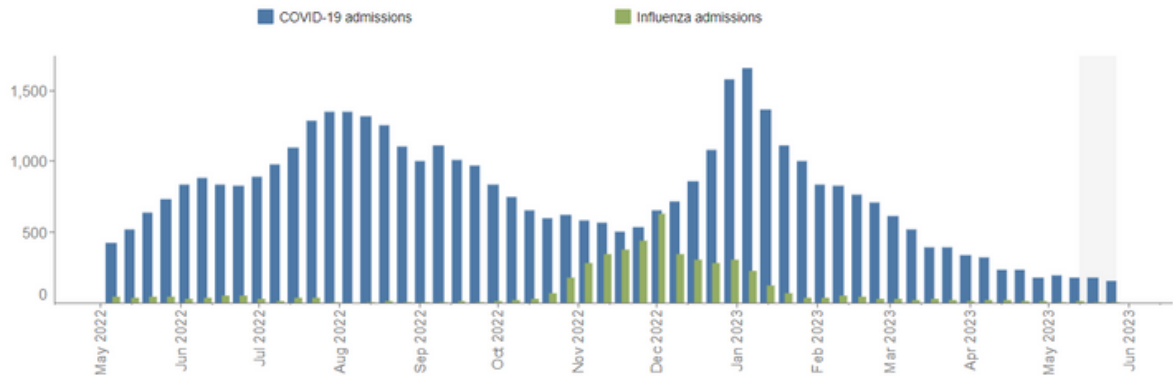
Percentage of North Carolina emergency department visits with symptoms or a diagnosis of a particular respiratory virus. [More info](#)

North Carolina COVID-19 and Respiratory Surveillance Updates Cont.

HOSPITAL ADMISSIONS FOR COVID-19 AND FLU

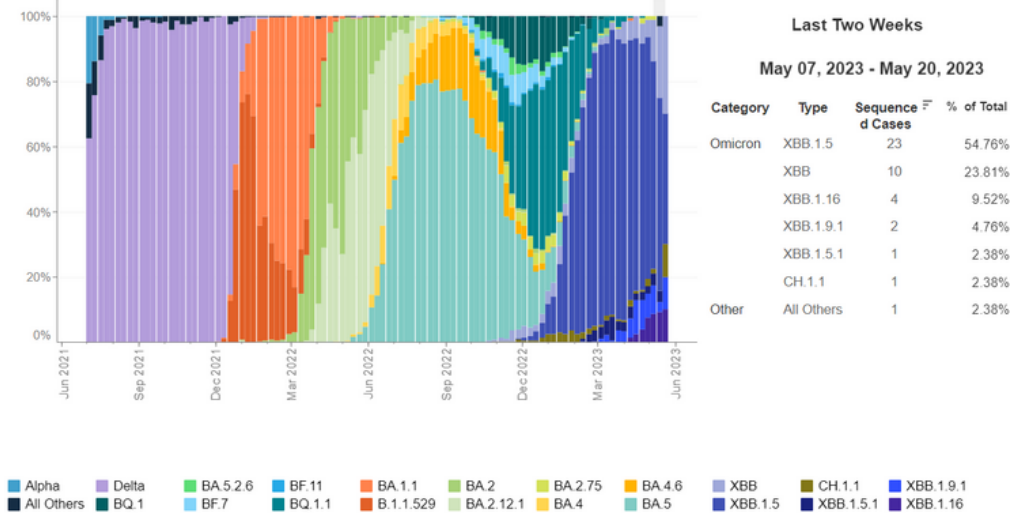
Hospital admissions for COVID-19 and influenza give an understanding of the impact on the health care system. When this number is high, it can mean that hospitals are strained to provide care and may not be able provide care for non-urgent medical procedures.

Latest Week: **161 hospital admissions** were for **COVID-19** and **7** were for **Influenza**, a decrease for **COVID-19** and a decrease for **Influenza** from the week before. (The week before was 178 for COVID-19 and 10 for Influenza.)



COVID-19 VARIANTS DETECTED IN NORTH CAROLINA BY WEEK

Most COVID-19 surges are caused by the emergence of new variants of COVID-19. Sequencing cases shows what variants are emerging in the population, and what are most prominent at any given point.



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