

The Health Status of Kittitas County:

Environmental Health



The environment in which we live is a large determining factor for physical and mental health. This measure concerns the impact of the environment on local residents, not the health of the ecological system itself. Food, water, animal, and vector borne diseases are just one indicator of environmental health, for with education and preventive measures, public health can work to reduce the spread of environmentally disseminated diseases.

Symbol Key:

- improving from previous years
- worsening from previous years
- neither worsening nor improving
- ☺ Healthy People 2010 Target met
- ☹ Healthy People 2010 Target unmet

	Kittitas County Rate	Washington State Rate	HP 2010 target
Unsafe food/water related diseases	● 122 people ill, 6 outbreaks	● 679 people ill, 56 outbreaks	☹ 11 out breaks/yr (nationally)
Water quality	● 94%	N/A	95%
Incidence of animal/vector borne disease	● 0 cases	● 19 cases	N/A
Reported animal bites	● 68	N/A	N/A
Meth Lab Incidents	● 6	● 806	N/A

****Details and explanations on the back of this page****

Food Borne Illnesses, or FBIs, are a serious issue nationwide:

- 76,000,000 cases annually nationwide
- 5,000 deaths nationwide
- 325,000 hospitalizations nationwide

Food Borne Illnesses are no less serious in Washington State:

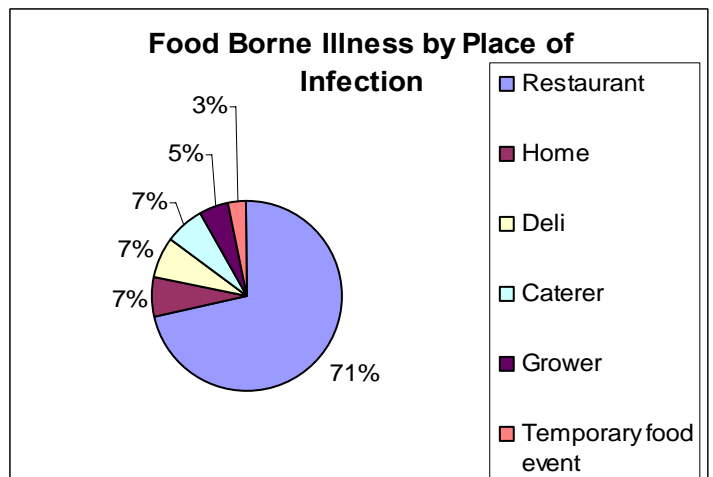
- 1,000,000 cases annually in Washington
- 100 deaths in Washington
- 6,500 hospitalizations in Washington

Reported numbers of Food Borne Illnesses are much lower than actual incidence of illness, because many of the symptoms are similar to the flu or common cold, and are not severe enough for the patient to report it.

All food workers in Washington State are required by law to have a valid Food Handlers Permit. Permits are available through the Kittitas County Public Health Department. Permits cost \$10, and require passage of an exam. Please call 509-962-7515 for more information.

Top Ten Food Borne Illness Contributing Factors (in order):

1. Infected or ill food worker
2. Bare hand contact
3. Ingesting contaminated food
4. Unknown cause
5. Contaminated raw products
6. Cross contamination
7. Slow cooling
8. Improper reheating
9. Hand washing
10. Room temperature storage



Data Sources and Statistics

Unsafe food / water quality: There were no cases of water quality related disease outbreaks in Kittitas County in 2005. 122 people became ill from food borne illness outbreaks in Kittitas County, contributing to 679 people statewide to become ill of food borne illnesses. These are reported cases only, and due to the nature of food borne illnesses, many outbreaks go unreported as many people simply endure the discomfort and let the illness pass. The actual number of food borne illnesses cases would be much higher if all cases were reported. The goal stated in Healthy People 2010 is to reduce outbreaks of infections caused by key food borne bacteria / water related diseases. The goal is to limit outbreaks to 11 in the U.S. per year. (Source: Environmental Health, Kittitas County, Washington State Department of Health Reportable Disease division.)

Water Quality: Defined as the proportion of persons served by community water systems who receive a supply of drinking water that meets the regulations of the Safe Drinking Water Act. The goal is to have 95% of US residents have a safe and consistent supply of water. In Kittitas County, 94% of residents on a Group A water system had a safe and consistent clean water supply. (Source: Healthy People 2010, Office of Drinking Water in the Washington State Department of Health).

Incidence of animal/vector borne disease: No zoonotic or vector borne diseases have been reported for Kittitas County in 2005 or 2006. In Washington State, 3 cases of West Nile Virus were confirmed (acquired in-state), 13 bats were confirmed to have rabies (no transmission to humans), and 3 human cases of Hantavirus Pulmonary Syndrome were confirmed. Mosquito-borne diseases that are tracked include West Nile, West Equine Encephalitis, and St. Louis Encephalitis. Tick-borne diseases include Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever, Relapsing Fever, and Lyme Disease. (Source: Zoonotic and Vector-borne Disease Program, Office of Environmental Health and Safety, Washington State Department of Health)



Reported animal bites: Animal bites are reported for testing for animal borne diseases such as rabies. Prophylactic treatment is available for many animal-borne diseases if conclusive tests are positive. 68 bites were reported in Kittitas County in 2006, and fortunately none held any disease. The number of bites reported at the state level is very large, so the Department of Health only tracks positive disease cases. (Source: Kittitas County Environmental Health)

Pesticide poisonings: Healthy People 2010 goal is to: reduce exposure of the population to pesticides, heavy metals, and other toxic chemicals, as measured by blood and urine concentrations of the substances or their metabolites. This measure is still in its developmental stages, and is not available with baseline or comparison data yet. (Source: Healthy People 2010.)

Meth Lab Incidents: This is a measure by the Washington State Department of Ecology, and counts the number of methamphetamine labs that were discovered and cleaned up in 2005. Six labs were dismantled in Kittitas County, contributing to the statewide total of 806. (Source: Washington State Department of Ecology)



What About Avian Flu?

Avian Flu is still, as the name implies, an avian, or bird, flu. There have only been a few hundred cases worldwide of bird to human transmission. These cases were all among people who worked very closely with birds without any protection. The virus has not mutated, and currently, human to human transmission is not possible.

Should the bird flu virus mutate and human to human transmission become possible, international, national, state, and local health departments will work together to reduce the spread of the disease. Emergency plans are already in place.

The best thing you can do to avoid transmission of avian flu, or any communicable disease, is to maintain good sanitation habits, most importantly, washing your hands frequently with warm soapy water for at least 20 seconds after contact with any unclean surface.