

'Flu-like' outbreak hits Deschutes Jail; 40 inmates, staff affected

by Cheryl McDermott

Dozens of inmates and staff of the Deschutes County Adult Jail have taken ill, suffering from symptoms of an outbreak defined as a "gastrointestinal illness," authorities reported. Sheriff's Office Administration was notified Wednesday and immediately contacted the Deschutes County Health Department. The outbreak so far has been limited to 40 inmates and staff.

"Working under the guidelines of the Deschutes County Health Department, the Deschutes County Adult jail is taking additional sanitary steps to control the outbreak," said Captain Tim Edwards. "Information received by Sheriff's Office Administration indicates that the illness has a duration of about 72 hours," he added.

Deschutes County Adult Jail

According to the Center for Disease Control (CDC), gastrointestinal illnesses that often strike confined areas with dense population may be caused by one of several viruses, resulting in an illness known as "viral gastroenteritis". Gastroenteritis means inflammation of the stomach and small and large intestines. Viral gastroenteritis is an infection caused by a variety of viruses that results in vomiting or diarrhea. It is often called the "stomach flu," although it is not caused by the influenza viruses.

The CDC states many different viruses can cause gastroenteritis, including rotaviruses, noroviruses, adenoviruses, type 40 or 41, sapoviruses, and astroviruses. Viral gastroenteritis is not caused by bacteria.

Norovirus outbreaks commonly occur in institutional settings, such as schools, childcare facilities, and nursing homes, and can occur in other group settings, such as banquet halls, cruise ships, dormitories, and campgrounds.

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