



**PUBLIC NOTIFICATION**  
**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE 7-26-2022**  
**OHIO CORONAVIRUS WASTEWATER MONITORING**  
**Monitoring of Community Wastewater Detects Elevated Levels of**  
**COVID-19 in Ashtabula**

In an ongoing effort to help mitigate the spread of COVID-19, a network across Ohio is studying samples of wastewater to look for the presence of fragments from the virus that causes the disease. An upward trend of viral gene copies has been detected in the Ashtabula sewer-shed, which serves Ashtabula City and parts of Saybrook and Ashtabula Township.

This trend is an early indicator that cases of COVID-19 in the community may be increasing. Residents should be on alert and remain vigilant in their efforts to social distance, wear face coverings, and adhere to prevention efforts such as frequent hand-washing and sanitizing.

This emerging information is being used by the Ashtabula City & Ashtabula County Health Departments in conjunction with our community case numbers and other COVID-19 related data to further inform decisions as we respond to the pandemic. The Ashtabula City & Ashtabula County Health Departments have alerted healthcare providers, nursing homes, and other shared-living facilities to be prepared for a potential increase in cases.

The increase of COVID-19 cases in communities is typically tracked by testing people with symptoms, an indicator that lags behind the actual spread of the disease. However, research has shown that non-infectious RNA (ribonucleic acid) from the virus that cause COVID-19 can be detected in wastewater as many as three to seven days before those infections lead to increases in case counts or hospitalizations. This means that monitoring raw wastewater in sewage collection systems can provide an early warning of disease increase in a community.

When interpreting this specific viral data in wastewater, it is only appropriate to monitor and observe the trends of viral gene copies detected in a community over time, not individual readings themselves. The Ashtabula Wastewater Treatment plant has demonstrated a sustained increase recorded from June 28, 2022, to July 17, 2022. This sustained increase in viral load demonstrates that there may be community increased transmission and citizens are cautioned to follow safe COVID-19 protocols.