

More than half of U.S. states not well prepared for disease outbreaks: study

December 17 2015



Efforts needed to boost ability to respond to viruses, superbug threats, researchers say.

(HealthDay)—More than half of U.S. states are poorly prepared to respond to infectious disease outbreaks, a new report says.

Twenty-eight states and Washington, D.C. did not pass muster for preventing, detecting, diagnosing and responding to such outbreaks, researchers found.

They added that the United States must boost efforts to protect Americans from new threats such as Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV) and antibiotic-resistant superbugs, along with resurging diseases such as tuberculosis, whooping cough and gonorrhea.

Delaware, Kentucky, Maine, New York and Virginia tied for the top

score, achieving eight of 10 indicators of preparedness. They were followed by: Alaska, California, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota and Nebraska at seven of 10; and Arkansas, Illinois, Iowa, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, North Carolina, North Dakota, Vermont, West Virginia and Wisconsin at six out of 10.

Due to their scores, the following states were considered not adequately prepared for infectious outbreaks: Arizona, Colorado, Connecticut, Georgia, Hawaii, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Texas and Washington scored five of 10. Alabama, District of Columbia, Florida, Indiana, Louisiana, Nevada, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee and Wyoming scored four of 10; Idaho, Kansas, Michigan, Ohio, Oregon and Utah scored three of 10, and Oklahoma finished last at two out of 10.

The categories included health care-associated infections, childhood vaccinations, flu vaccinations, hepatitis C and HIV/AIDS, food safety, antibiotic-resistant superbugs and the ability to deal with emerging infectious disease threats.

The report, released Dec. 17 by the Trust for America's Health (TFAH) and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, also included a number of recommendations for improving preparedness for dealing with [infectious diseases](#).

"The overuse of antibiotics and underuse of vaccinations, along with unstable and insufficient funding have left major gaps in our country's ability to prepare for infectious disease threats," said Jeffrey Levi, executive director of TFAH.

"We cannot afford to continue to be complacent. Infectious diseases—which are largely preventable—disrupt the lives of millions of Americans and contribute to billions of dollars in unnecessary health

care costs each year," he said in a news release from the two groups.

Paul Kuehnert, a Robert Wood Johnson Foundation director, said, "America's investments in infectious disease prevention ebb and flow, leaving our nation challenged to sufficiently address persistent problems.

"We need to reboot our approach so we support the health of every community by being ready when new infectious threats emerge," he said.

More information: The World Health Organization has more on [infectious diseases](#).

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Citation: More than half of U.S. states not well prepared for disease outbreaks: study (2015, December 17) retrieved 4 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2015-12-states-disease-outbreaks.html>

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