

Wauwatosa
HEALTH DEPARTMENT

2022

**ENVIRONMENTAL
HEALTH
ASSESSMENT**



T (414) 479 - 8936
F (414) 471 - 8483
www.wauwatosa.net/health

Wauwatosa Health Dept.

7725 West North Avenue
Wauwatosa, WI 53213

TABLE OF CONTENTS:

- 2. Introduction
- 3 - 4. Meet the EH Staff
- 5 - 6. Food Licensing & Safety**
- 5. Inspections
- 5. Food Licensing
- 6. Food-Borne Illnesses
- 7 - 13. Animals**
- 7. Animal Bites & Exposures
- 8. Rabies
- 8. Dangerous and Vicious Dogs
- 9. Wildlife Issues
- 10. Animal Owner Regulations
- 11. Pest Control-Rats
- 12. Rats
- 13. Lyme Disease
- 14 - 18. Home Health Hazards**
- 14. Lead
- 15. Radon
- 16. Radon FAQ
- 17. Carbon Monoxide
- 17. Mold
- 18. Non-Animal Nuisances
- 18. Hoarding
- 19. Next Steps
- 20. Resources
- 20. Contact Us



Photos by Cindi Lambert, RN, BSN

INTRODUCTION TO ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH

We engage with our surroundings in various ways every day. These actions, whether direct or indirect, have an impact on the health and wellness of our community. The World Health Organization defines environmental health risks as factors that are outside of a person, including physical, chemical, and biological elements, as well as related behaviors.

The environment can have things that can harm our health, like chemicals or germs, that we can't easily change. The Wauwatosa Health Department looks into these risks to keep people healthy. They study things like food safety, animals, and hazards in people's homes to learn what's being done and how to make it better.

"Public health issues linked to the environment are becoming increasingly complex. The public health system must protect the health of all persons from environmental threats. To do this, we will continue to build on strong and enduring relationships and partnerships among all levels of government, across agencies and within both the private sector and the greater Wauwatosa community."

Laura Stephens, MPH, Health Officer/Director

City of
Wauwatosa
City Hall
Civic Center
Library

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH STAFF

Meghan Spredemann, REHS/RS Public Health Manager

Meghan is an Environmental Health Specialist who has been working since 2012 to improve environmental health in the City of Wauwatosa. She is dedicated to creating new policies and programs to keep people safe and prepared for emergencies.



Andy Budde, MS, RS Environmental Health Specialist

Andy has spent the last 22 years working in environmental health in Southeast Wisconsin. As a Registered Sanitarian, Certified Lead Risk Assessor, and Certified Pool Operator, he brings a wealth of experience and problem solving skills to the residents of Wauwatosa. As someone who is passionate about the outdoors, Andy enjoys the ability to engage with the community and educate residents about the many facets of environmental health.



ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH STAFF

**Whitney Johnson, EHS, NWCO
member
Environmental Health Specialist**

Rats, bats, and cats! Oh my! Whitney, a recent graduate of Carroll University, started as an intern for the City of Wauwatosa Health Department. Whitney's research examined Norway rats and the best practices in integrated pest management for urban cities and the zoological diseases associated with rats. Whitney is passionate about zoonotic diseases and educating others on how to cohabitate with wildlife.



**Courtney Ameen, Administrative
Support Specialist**

I have been working in Health Care since 2008 in various different roles. Before coming to the Wauwatosa Health Department I worked at Froedtert Hospital in Radiology for 6 years. Working in public health has been one of the most enjoyable roles I have taken on and has opened my eyes to a whole different aspect of Health Care and Environmental practices.



FOOD LICENSING & SAFETY

Inspections

Our environmental health division ensures restaurants and places that sell food in the City of Wauwatosa have the right licenses. These places have to follow certain rules about health and safety that are set by the city and other government agencies. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, inspections were temporarily halted so environmentalist health specialists could assist with the City's COVID-19 emergency response. In 2022, regular inspection schedules have resumed.

Establishment Licensing

In order to begin the food licensing process an application has to be filled out based on what type of license is being obtained. The different types include: restaurant license, retail food license, temporary food event license, hotel & pool license, and bed & breakfast license.

Since 2019, 82 new establishments have opened or changed ownership.

Food-borne Illnesses in Wauwatosa

	2020	2021	2022*
Campylobacteriosis	6	3	2
Cryptosporidium	1	2	1
E.Coli Shiga Toxin-Producing (STEC)	1	2	1
Giardiasis	3	1	0
Salmonellosis	5	5	5
Shigella	0	1	1

*2022 numbers as of June Source: WEDDS (June, 2022)

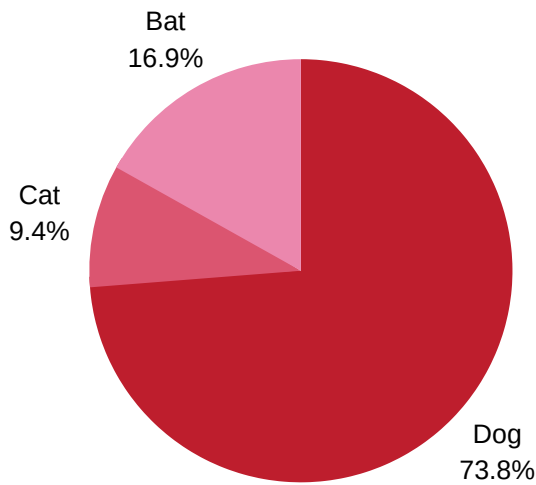
Food-borne Illnesses

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), around 48 million people get sick annually due to food-borne illnesses from more than 250 food-borne diseases ranging in symptoms and severity. When two or more non-related persons report experiencing similar signs, symptoms, and onsets of a known food-borne illness that has been traced back to a common food item or common food source, it is the health department's responsibility to follow-up and investigate. Follow-up can include an inspection and possible citations if violations are found and not corrected. Although inspections are required annually, they can be conducted more frequently if the health department notices an increase in food-borne related illnesses.

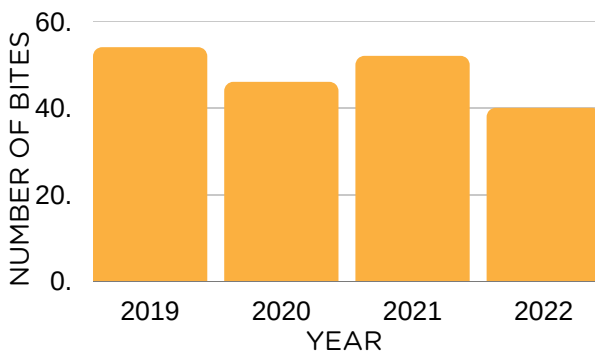
ANIMALS

Both domestic and wild animals affect a community’s health, and it is the health department’s role to eliminate the negative affects while ensuring residents continue to experience the benefits of animals in their daily lives.

Breakdown of Animal Bites & Exposures 2019-2022



Animal Bites 2019-2022 Wauwatosa Health Dept.



Animal Bites and Exposures

It’s extremely important to report animal bites and exposures immediately. Both the police department and environmental health staff play a role in investigating. Animal bites should be reported to the Wauwatosa Police Department. Other animal exposures, such as a bat in a house, are also reported to Health Department. In addition to reporting the incident, the wound should be thoroughly washed with soap and water. If the wound is serious, one should seek medical attention.

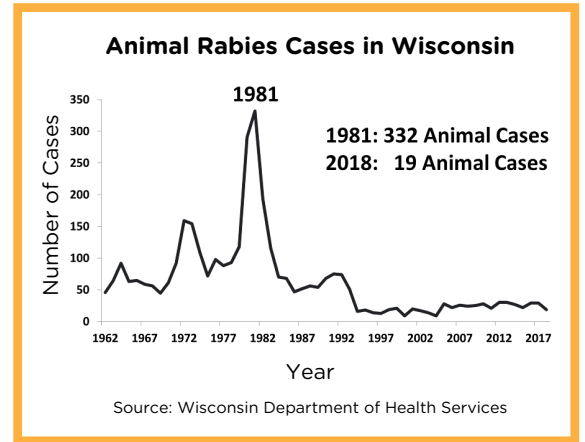
For more information on dog bite prevention, please reference the Center for Disease Control:

<https://www.cdc.gov/features/dog-bite-prevention/index.html>

ANIMALS

Rabies

Although contracting the rabies virus is extremely rare, it is the most common disease humans are at risk of when bitten by an animal. An infected animal can spread the rabies virus through their bite and saliva. This can be prevented by ensuring dogs & cats are up to date on their vaccinations.



Dangerous Dogs

Wauwatosa Totals (2019-2022*)

Issued	15
Upheld	6

*2022 numbers as of June

Dangerous & Vicious Dogs

The health department plays an important role in preventing dog bites and attacks to ensure the safety of residents and their four legged friends.

All reported dog bites are reviewed by the health department for a possible dangerous or vicious

dog declaration. It is legal for Wauwatosa residents to own a dangerous dog, however, there are additional requirements for the owner including, but not limited to displaying a sign warning other residents of the dangerous dog and remaining in an enclosed area while outside. The owner may choose to bring the dog outside of the enclosure if they follow leash and muzzle requirements for dangerous dogs. Vicious dogs are not permitted in the City of Wauwatosa. Additional information and definitions can be found in Chapter 9.04 of the City of Wauwatosa's Municipal Code.

ANIMALS



Wildlife Issues

In recent years, wildlife issues have been on the rise in Wauwatosa. This has included increased sightings of coyotes, raccoons, turkeys, and other wildlife in residential areas. The city has been working to address these issues through education, outreach, and management strategies to ensure the safety of both residents and animals.

The City of Wauwatosa recently implemented a new ordinance that prohibits the feeding of wildlife within the city limits. The ordinance was enacted to address the growing concerns of public safety, health, and wildlife management issues caused by the feeding of wild animals. The City hopes that this new ordinance will help reduce conflicts between humans and wildlife and create a safer environment.

Number of Pets Wauwatosa City Ordinance

"To keep, maintain, shelter, lodge or be possessed of more than a total of three cats or dogs or a combination thereof not to exceed a total of three animals over the age of three months, in any residence, apartment, yard or property within the city of Wauwatosa is a public nuisance and the same is prohibited."



ANIMALS

WAUWATOSA ANIMAL OWNER REGULATIONS

Pets must be leashed at all times.

Pets may not run loose on any public property, with the exception of designated dog parks. Pets must be confined by a leash, pen, or fence while on your property.

You may only own 3 animals.

You may not possess or foster more than a total of 3 cats or dogs or a combination thereof in any residence, apartment, or property.

Pets are required to be vaccinated against rabies.

You must have your pet vaccinated by a veterinarian within 30 days of the animal reaching five months of age and re-vaccinated as required.

Pet bites are reportable incidents.

You are required to report any incident of a bite, attack or injury to the Wauwatosa Police Department (stop by in person or call 414-471-8430).

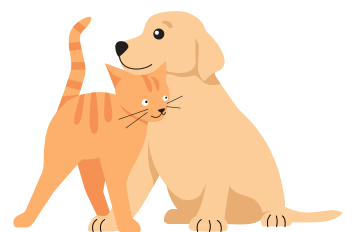
An annual license is required for all cats and dogs.

You can obtain a license through the Wauwatosa Treasurer's Office. Pets must have visible license tags attached to a collar.

Pet owners are required to clean up after their pet.

You are required to remove your animal's excrement from public property or the property of another person.

Regulations set forth in Wauwatosa Municipal Code Chapter 9.02 - Regulations on Animals. Violations of the Wauwatosa Municipal Code are subject to penalties and fines.

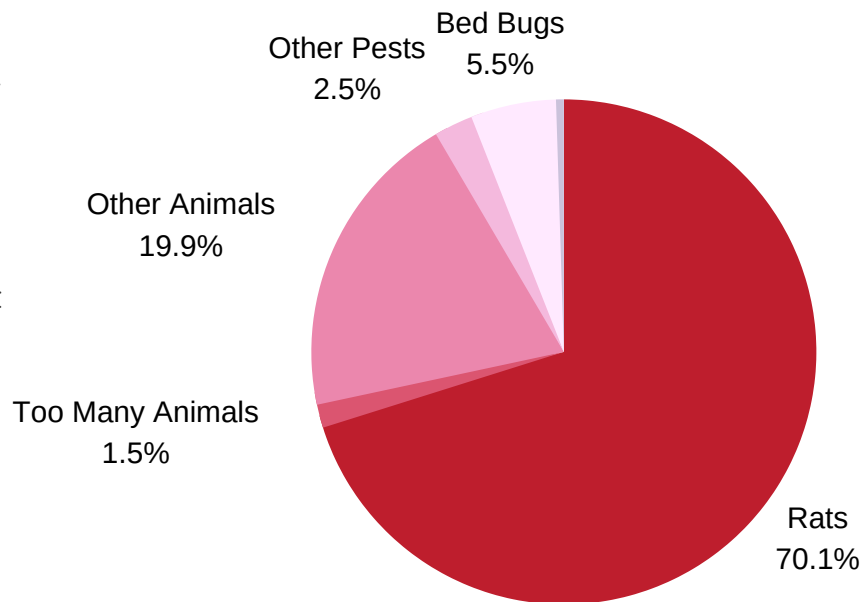


ANIMALS

Pest Control - Rats

Although there have been no known cases of a Wauwatosa resident contracting an illness or disease due to contact with a rat, it is important to minimize behaviors that could increase rat activity. Removing potential food, water, and shelter are effective ways to decrease rat habitability. If you are already experiencing rat populations on your property, poison and trapping are options to decrease the population. The health department can provide information related to rodent control, however, we do not offer any pest control services.

The Wauwatosa Health Department received 201 animal nuisance complaints from 2019-2022.



For more information on animal issues, please reference the
Wauwatosa Health Department website:

<https://www.wauwatosa.net/government/departments/health/animal-issues>

ANIMALS

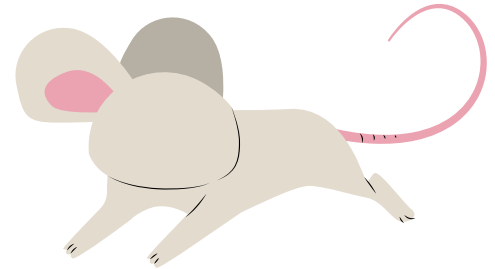
How do I know if I have rats on my property?

Burrows are oval shaped holes in dirt or concrete from 1 to 4 inches wide, with smooth edges. They can be found under bushes and along foundations or walls.

Droppings are often found close to garbage. If they are moist and dark it is a sign that rats are active in the area.

Holes and gnaw marks might be seen on plastic garbage cans or the bottom of garage doors.

Runways are created by rats running back and forth along the same path. Rats can leave dark, greasy track marks on grass or concrete.



Rat Facts

1. Rats eat everything!
2. Rats gnaw through plastic, wood, soft metals, electrical wires, and even cinder block.
3. Rats squeeze into tiny spaces, nest where it is dark and warm, and can produce a litter of pups (babies) every 3 to 4 weeks.



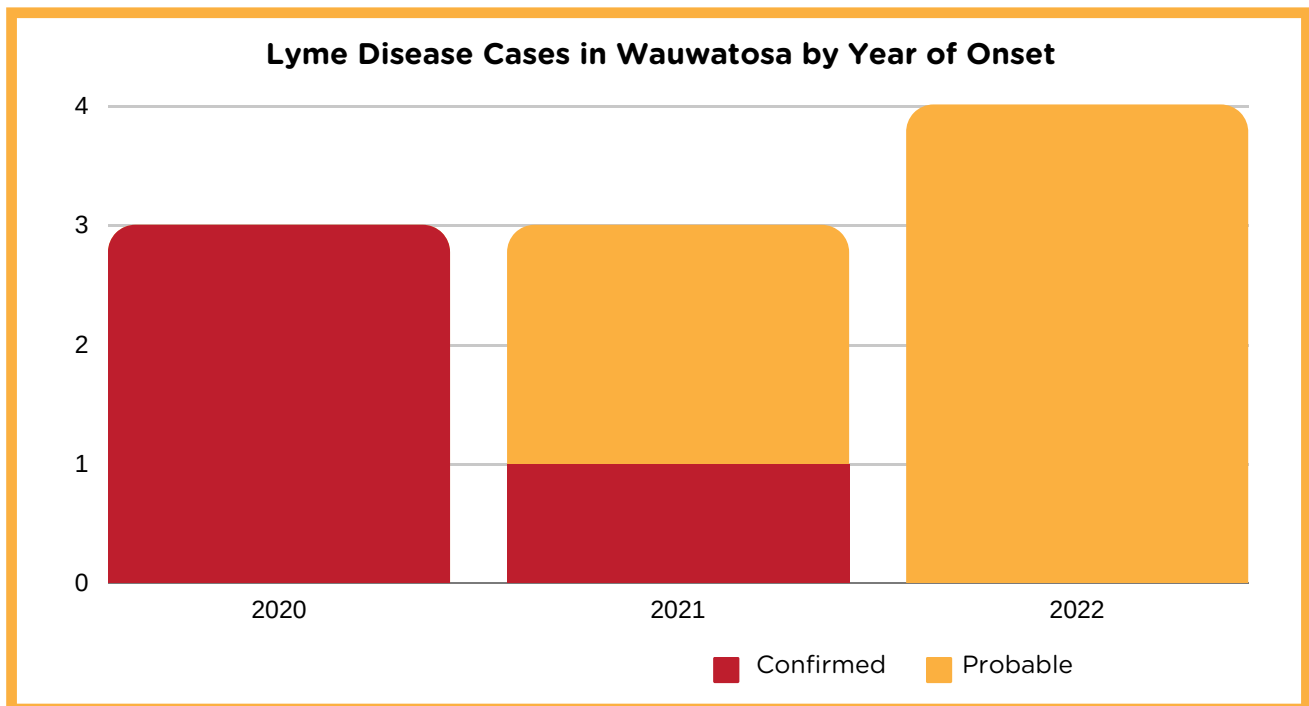
Common Outdoor Food Sources for Rats

1. Bird and squirrel food (all varieties)
2. Pet food and pet feces
3. Food waste, compost bins, and garbage

ANIMALS

Lyme Disease

Lyme disease is one of the most common vector-borne diseases in the United States. It can be misdiagnosed and lead to adverse health outcomes—especially when left untreated. People most at risk of contracting Lyme disease are those that spend a lot of time outdoors in woods, brush, or tall grass. Removing ticks as soon as possible is extremely important as it takes at least 24 hours for Lyme disease to spread to a person. The Wisconsin Department of Health Services recommends that people wear insect repellent, dress appropriately for the outdoors, avoid direct contact with ticks, and check for ticks after spending time outside.



Source: Wisconsin Department of Health Services
Environmental Public Health Tracking Program

HOME HEALTH HAZARDS

Lead

Lead is highly toxic, especially in children under the age of six. Prolonged lead poisoning in children can lead to reduced kidney function, learning disabilities, increased behavioral disorders, and death in severe acute exposures. The main source of childhood lead poisoning is from lead-based paints found in older homes. Lead-based paints were taken off the market in 1978, but any residential property built before 1978 may still have lead paint. In Wauwatosa, approximately 97% of homes were built prior to 1978. In order to reduce the chance of lead exposure, old windows and doors should be replaced, and remodeling should be conducted in a lead-safe manner.

Since COVID-19, there has been a decrease in Wisconsin children that are being tested for elevated blood levels. From April 2019 to April 2020, there was a 75% decrease in testing frequency.

If you are interested in testing your water for lead, contact the health department at 414-479-8936 Monday through Friday from 8:30 am to 4:00 pm for additional information.

In 2020,

98%

of children under the age of 6 that were tested for lead poisoning in Wauwatosa tested with blood lead levels below 5 ug/DL!

HOME HEALTH HAZARDS

Radon

Radon is a colorless, odorless, radioactive gas that is the second leading cause of lung cancer. Radon enters homes through cracks in floors or walls, gaps in suspended floors, near service pipes or construction joints, and open spaces inside walls. It is important to test your home for radon to learn what the radon levels are, and if they are high, to find out what actions can be taken in your home.

The Wauwatosa Health Department tracks the number of radon testing kits distributed and the results. Through email reminders, we were able to increase the number of kits that were submitted from 49% in 2017 to 58% in 2018! As seen below, there was a decrease in the number of kits in 2020 (due to COVID-19), but they are on an increase after 2020.

If you are interested in testing your home for radon, you can pick up a testing kit for \$10 from the health department during the winter season, Monday through Friday from 8:30 am - 4:00 pm.

Radon in Wauwatosa

	2019	2020	2021	2022
Total Number of Kits with a Radon Result	95	26	50	55
Highest Radon Result	17.7	50.8	15.8	12.4
Average Radon Level of Kits with Result	3.15	6.33	3.75	4.17
Results less than 4 pCi/l	71	17	31	30
Results between 4 and 7.9 pCi/l	20	5	13	17
Results between 8 and 19.9 pCi/l	4	2	6	8
Results greater than 19.9 pCi/l	0	2	0	0
No exposure because of missing data exposures < 48 hours, or > 96 hours	3	1	0	1
Total Number of Kits Submitted to the Lab	98	27	50	56

What is Radon?

Radon is a radioactive gas that can cause lung cancer. It is a naturally occurring gas that seeps into building from surrounding soil. You can't see, taste or smell radon.

FAQS ABOUT RADON

Where is Radon found?

High levels have been found in a number of homes in southeastern Wisconsin including Wauwatosa.

How does Radon get in my home?

Radon enters homes through cracks in foundations, openings around pumps and drains, and cracks in walls. It is most concentrated in the lowest level of the home. Radon may also be present in well water.

Is there a safe level?

No, whatever the level, there is a risk. But, the lower the level the lower the risk. Any reading above 4pCi/L is at action level.

What health effects are linked to radon?

Radon is linked only to lung cancer. Indoor radon is the second leading cause of lung cancer after smoking.

Is Radon a concern in some areas as opposed to others?

Elevated indoor radon levels have been found in all areas of Wisconsin. Houses next door to each other can have very different levels. The only way to know if your house has elevated radon levels is to test.

How do I test my house?

You can purchase "do-it-yourself" kits at retail outlets or through the mail and follow the instructions that come with the kit. You may also hire a company to test your home for you. The Southeastern Wisconsin Radon Information Center can provide a list of certified contractors by calling 888-569-7236.

Where can I buy a kit?

Short term test kits are available at the Wauwatosa Health Department for \$10 which includes the cost of laboratory analysis. Home owners will need to pay their own postage (6 first class stamps) to mail the kit for analysis. Test kits are also generally available at most hardware stores, supermarkets, and retail outlets.

For more information:

Environmental Protection Agency (EPA): <http://www.epa.gov/radon>

Wisconsin Department of Health Services: <http://www.lowradon.org>

HOME HEALTH HAZARDS

Carbon Monoxide

Carbon monoxide poisoning is a very serious, yet easily preventable, health risk. It's important to know that carbon monoxide (CO) cannot be seen, smelled, or heard. That is why Wisconsin law requires that all households have a CO detector. Additionally, it is important for households with oil and gas furnaces to have their furnaces inspected every year to prevent leaks and increase efficiency.

CARBON MONOXIDE (CO) POISONING



Mold

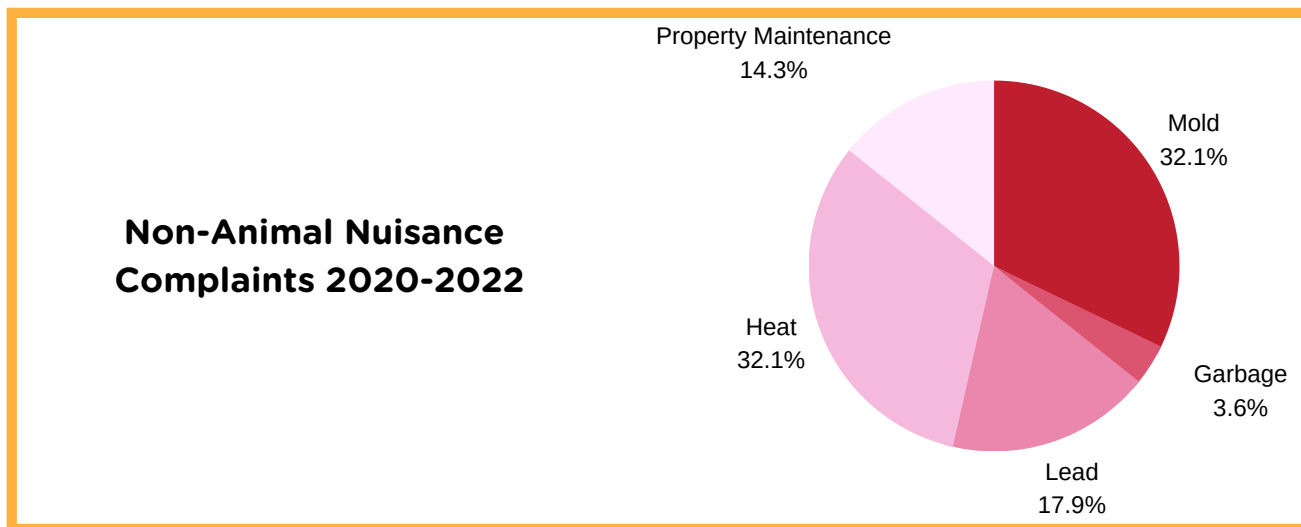
Mold is a fungi that lives in warm, damp, and humid environments. Since allergy symptoms are the most common reaction to mold, the CDC does not recommend that residents test for mold. If you find yourself to be more susceptible to mold, it is recommended that mold be removed regardless of type. Currently, there is no set amount of mold that is or is not acceptable to have in one's home. For additional information on mold, please view the Wisconsin Department of Health Services' "Controlling Mold and Moisture" toolkit:

<https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/publications/p02069.pdf>

HOME HEALTH HAZARDS

Non-Animal Nuisances

The health department helps residents navigate a variety of nuisances, including but not limited to mold, lead, garbage, heat, and other housing related topics. Environmental health staff work hard to eliminate these nuisances through warning letters, door hangers, and education of Wauwatosa Ordinances. Below is a breakdown of which nuisance-related calls were most common from 2020-2022.



Hoarding

Hoarding is a life safety issue that involves a resident accumulating or collecting items that can affect the safety and sanitation of their living environment. The health department wants to ensure that residents are living in a healthy and safe environment that allows residents to care for themselves with access to proper hygiene and emergency services.

Environmental health staff work with public health nurses to follow up on referrals to complete inspections and medically evaluate residents at risk of hoarding.

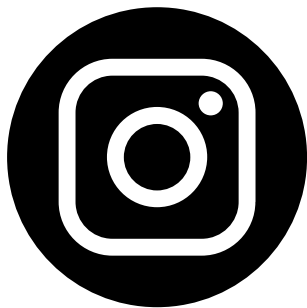
NEXT STEPS

Built Environment

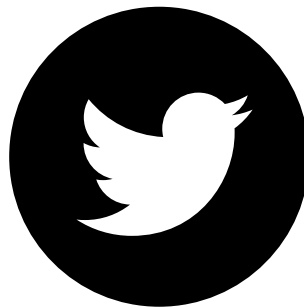
Our environment that we interact with on a daily basis includes not only the natural environment, but also the built environment. The Centers for Disease Control defines built environment as "all of the physical parts of where we live and work." The physical space we live in exposes us to different pollutants and can influence lifestyles that make one more susceptible to chronic disease. Building a healthier community requires a high level of collaboration across multiple departments and organizations. Together we can create a healthy environment that promotes and facilitates overall wellbeing for Wauwatosa residents.



Stay Updated



@WauwatosaHealthDepartment



@HealthyTosa



WauwatosaHealthDepartment

RESOURCES

Food Safety & Inspections

<https://www.cdc.gov/foodsafety/foodborne-germs.html>

<https://www.wauwatosanet.net/government/departments/health/food-restaurants>

Animal Exposures

<https://www.cdc.gov/features/dog-bite-prevention/index.html>

<https://www.wauwatosanet.net/government/departments/health/animal-issues>

<https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/tick/lyme-about.htm>

<https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/tick/lyme-reporting-surveillance.htm>

<https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/tick/bite-prevention.htm>

Home Health Hazards

<https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/publications/p02069.pdf>

<https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/lead/index.htm>

<http://www.epa.gov/radon>

<http://www.lowradon.org>

<https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/air/co.htm>

<https://www.cdc.gov/co/>

CONTACT US

Public Health Information Line

8:00 am - 4:30 pm
Monday - Friday
(414) 479-8936

A member of our staff is available to answer questions or concerns on a variety of public health topics including:

- Providing information on health department programs and community resources
- Conducting a confidential health consultation
- Providing current information on immunization requirements and needs
- Educating about communicable disease prevention
- Answering questions about restaurants and other food establishments
- Providing information about pest and nuisance control in and around your property
- Other environmental or health related topics