

COVID-19 exposure in Oregonians at 1 percent, study finds

Rate is 10 times higher than conventional testing shows

As of mid-June, 1 percent of Oregonians without COVID-19 had evidence of past infection of the virus in their blood, which is 10 times higher than the reported rate of infections obtained through conventional testing, according to a new study. Oregon Health Authority epidemiologists who authored the study, which

appears in the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (MMWR), found that nine of 897 blood specimens collected from 19 health care facilities around Oregon between May 11 and June 15, 2020, contained antibodies against the virus that causes COVID-19.

The study also suggested that rates of infection increased with age, with no antibodies detected in the blood of pediatric patients 17 and younger.

The rate was 0.4-0.5 percent in those ages 18-64; and 1.6-2.1 percent in those 65 and older.

The results indicate a "substantial" proportion of Oregon residents have undiagnosed and unreported infection from COVID-19.

"We suspected that a much larger segment of Oregon's population has been exposed to and infected with COVID-19 than traditional diagnostic testing shows," said Paul Cieslak, M.D., a study co-author and OHA medical director for communicable diseases and immunizations. "But these results also tell us that the great majority of Oregonians remain susceptible to this virus."

The first case of COVID-19 in Oregon was diagnosed Feb. 28, 2020. Through May 31, 4,243 people in Oregon, or about one of every 1,000 people, had tested positive for COVID-19.

Because this rate doesn't account for people who were infected but did not seek testing — such as those with mild

or no symptoms, or people unable to access testing — the rate is believed to be lower than the state's actual infection count.

Seroprevalence surveys like this one — testing blood samples to look for antibodies — may estimate the rate of infection more accurately than conventional testing by identifying all people who have had previous infections with COVID-19, including those who didn't show symptoms or did not seek care.

"Because most of us are still susceptible," said Cieslak, "we need to keep practicing physical distancing and masking until we have effective vaccines, treatments or other means of mitigating illness."

The antibody test shows that people whose

blood was tested for antibodies were exposed to COVID-19 at some point, even if they never had symptoms.

But Cieslak emphasized it's not a good test to get if one thinks they have COVID-19, because antibodies don't appear in blood until two to three weeks after exposure to the virus.

Plus, he explained, "we don't know if antibodies to COVID-19 mean you are protected, so you still need to wear a face covering, maintain physical distancing, and keep washing your hands."

For more information on antibody testing, visit the CDC website at www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/testing/serology-overview.html.

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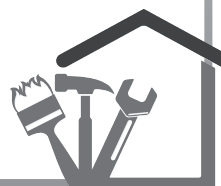
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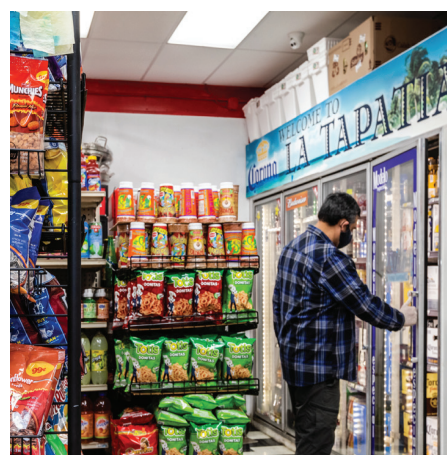
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Small businesses are cutting costs during the pandemic with energy incentives



New LED lighting at La Tapatia 2 makes shopping easier for customers while store owners save thousands in energy costs each year.

Projects meant to bring down utility bills are doing much more for small businesses in Oregon — some are making properties safer and more convenient for customers.

Juan Alavarez owns La Tapatia 2, a Mexican grocery and meat market in Gresham. He recently installed new energy-efficient LED lighting to replace the outdated lighting outside his store with help from Energy Trust of Oregon. Although he was looking for energy savings, the upgrade brought some additional, unexpected benefits to his business. Alvarez says his building is now safer and there's less vandalism.

"The new lighting is brighter and not easily breakable. Security is better. Customers and neighbors say it looks amazing."

— Juan Alavarez, owner of La Tapatia 2

Inside the store, Alavarez also replaced all of the overhead fluorescent lighting with LEDs, which has helped lighten up darker corners. That makes it easier for customers to see what's on each store shelf. "The first day after installation, customers commented that they could see our products better," said Alvarez.

The upgrades inside and out are saving La Tapatia 2 an estimated \$2,600 each year in energy costs. But the store only had to pay about 20% of the \$34,000 project cost to purchase and install the new lighting, thanks to incentives offered by Energy Trust. Energy Trust is a nonprofit created by the State of Oregon to connect more people to sustainable, affordable energy and clean, renewable power.

Energy Trust provides cash incentives to individuals, businesses, schools, municipalities and others for equipment and projects that help use less energy.

Since 2002, Energy Trust has provided incentives to thousands of Gresham families, businesses, schools, farms and ranches for energy upgrades, helping Gresham utility customers save more than \$40 million on utility bills from participation in Energy Trust.

Visit energytrust.org/this-is-oregon to see more of how Energy Trust is helping small businesses around the state.

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