

WATER SHUTOFFS IMPACT PUBLIC HEALTH

A new study by We the People of Detroit Community Research Collective and Henry Ford Health System shows a correlation between water shutoffs and water-related illnesses.

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In collaboration with We the People of Detroit Community Research Collective

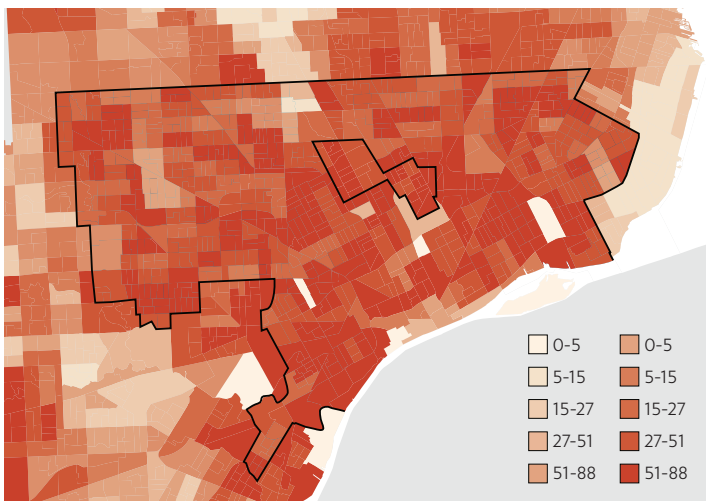
Summary

Researchers from Henry Ford Health System's Global Health Initiative and Division of Infectious Disease have found a significant connection between City of Detroit government-imposed water shutoffs and water-related illnesses experienced by a sample of Henry Ford Hospital patients: skin and soft tissue infections and water borne bacterial infections.

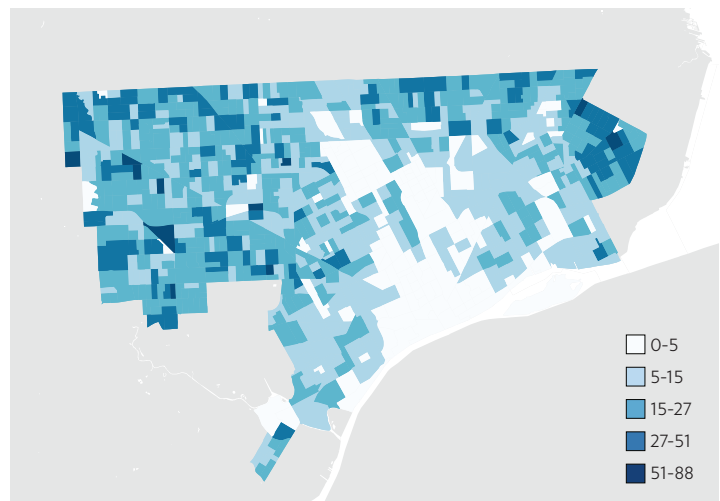
The researchers analyzed a data set of 37,441 cases where patients were diagnosed with water-borne illness between January 1, 2015 and February 12, 2016 at Henry Ford Hospital. This data set was compared with a list of Detroit addresses, anonymized to the block level, whose water had been shut off by the City of Detroit for nonpayment of water bills during that same time period.

Even when taking into account the effects of socioeconomic status and poverty, the study showed a significant relationship between water-related illnesses and shutoffs:

- 1 Patients admitted to Henry Ford Hospital with water-related illnesses were significantly more likely to live on a block that has experienced water shutoffs. Patients diagnosed with skin and soft tissue diseases were **1.48 times more likely** to live on a block that has experienced water shutoffs.
- 2 Living on a block that has experienced water shutoffs **increases the likelihood** that the patient will be diagnosed with a water-related illness.
- 3 Patients who are most likely to experience water-related illnesses resulting from water shutoffs are **also the most socially vulnerable**, according to the Center for Disease Control's "Social Vulnerability Index."



“Social Vulnerability Index” Ranking which takes into account poverty, access to housing, health care and transportation, language, household composition and disability, 2014 (by Census Tract)



Residential Water Shutoffs in Detroit based on compiled DWSD FOIA data, January 2015–February 2016 (by Census Block Group)*

*This is an incomplete data set which likely represents about half of all shutoffs that took place in this time period. If DWSD would provide a full data set per our FOIA requests, a much more robust study would be possible.

NEXT STEPS

What should happen next?

1. The City of Detroit must institute an **immediate moratorium on all water shutoffs**.
2. The City of Detroit must institute a **water affordability plan** based on a resident’s ability to pay.
3. The City of Detroit must release water shutoff data necessary to complete a **more thorough study** of the impact of water shutoffs on public health, with an analysis as to how these conditions further contribute to racial health inequities.

How can I protect my family from these water-related illnesses?

1. Use bottled water for drinking or try to get water from a neighbor, **ESPECIALLY** for vulnerable populations.
2. Be careful not to reach hands into an open source (bucket/jug) of water. This can contaminate the water.
3. If the toilet cannot be flushed and human waste is sitting in it, periodically pour a bucket of water directly into the bowl to manually flush it; gravity will do the trick and send it to the sewer.
4. You can use rubbing alcohol to clean hands and wounds as much as possible. Consider asking neighbors or friends to come use their shower to bathe yourself and your family.
5. Once your water is reconnected, let it run for a little while (at least 5 minutes) before you drink it. This can help discharge any contaminants that might have settled in the pipes while it was shut off.

My water is shut off or at risk of being shut off. What should I do?

Call We the People of Detroit’s water rights hotline at 1-844-42WATER (1-844-429-2837). Our volunteers can assist Detroiters with locating emergency water and making payment arrangements with DWSD. We can also assist with finding and navigating the various water resources that are currently available.

www.wethepeopleofdetroit.org