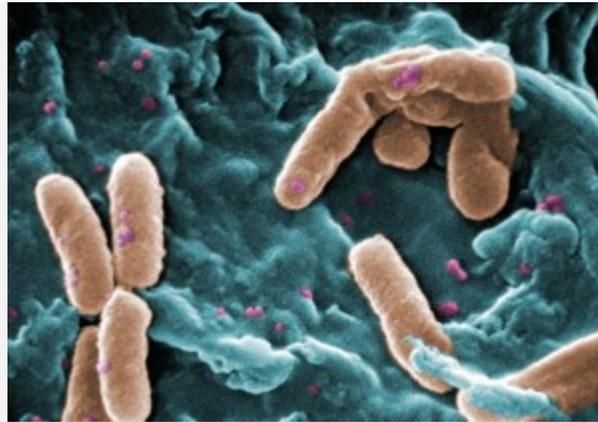


# Pseudomonas Aeruginosa Outbreak Due To Ear Piercings, At Least A Dozen Affected

Wed, Jul 24th, 2013

The [Winnebago County Health Department](#) (WCHD) in Rockford, Illinois has updated the number of cases of *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* infection due to ear cartilage piercings today. According to health officials, “preliminary data indicates we have 12 laboratory confirmed cases and an additional 4 probable cases, with one facility being implicated at this time.”



*Pseudomonas aeruginosa*  
Image/CDC

Cases range in age from 13 to 49; all had ears pierced between 3/28/13 and 7/9/2013. Six patients were hospitalized and ten required surgical intervention as part of their treatment. Persons who developed infections reside in Winnebago, Boone, Ogle, DeKalb, and Stephenson Counties.

The [Rockford Register Star](#) reported today that the facility noted above is Euro 2 Tattoo, 5920 E. State St., in Rockford.

The news source also reports that the business voluntarily ceased piercing operations on July 15 pending further investigation of the outbreak.

“*Pseudomonas aeruginosa* is a serious bacterial infection that can carry some potential for permanent disfigurement,” said Winnebago County Health Administer Mike Bacon. “*Pseudomonas* infections of ear cartilage can be difficult to treat.”

WCHD officials recommend individuals interested in body piercing should verify that the facility is registered with the State of Illinois and ensure appropriate hygienic guidelines are followed. According to the [Todar's Online Textbook of Bacteriology](#), *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* is an opportunistic pathogen, meaning that it exploits some break in the host defenses to initiate an infection. In fact, *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* is the epitome of an opportunistic pathogen of humans.

The bacterium almost never infects uncompromised tissues, yet there is hardly any tissue that it cannot infect if the tissue defenses are compromised in some manner.

It causes urinary tract infections, respiratory system infections, dermatitis, soft tissue infections, bacteremia, bone and joint infections, gastrointestinal infections and a variety of systemic infections, particularly in patients with severe burns and in cancer and AIDS patients who are immunosuppressed.

Health officials tell the public to call the Winnebago County Health Department at [\(815\) 720-4050](tel:(815)720-4050) to report a recent history of ear piercing and symptoms at the site of the ear piercing. If a person has had an ear piercing and develops redness, swelling or pain following a piercing, especially of the upper ear, they should seek medical attention and should contact their local Health Department.