

# New Jersey care facility is fined \$600,000 after 11 children died last fall in viral outbreak

- Center for severely disabled children in Haskell, New Jersey was fined \$600K
- Adenovirus killed 11 kids at Wanaque Center for Nursing and Rehabilitation
- The virus causes the common cold and is mild for most, but can kill children
- Some strains spread rapidly in communal living and health care settings

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The federal government has imposed a \$600,000 fine on the New Jersey nursing home where 11 children died and 36 became sick during a virus outbreak last fall.

The fine came after officials found conditions posed 'immediate jeopardy' to patients at the Wanaque Center for Nursing and Rehabilitation, and Pediatric Center, in Haskell, New Jersey, [NorthJersey.com](#) reported.

Inspectors found lapses in hand-washing and infection control, substandard care, a lack of involvement by the medical director, and poor administrative oversight at the facility, which cares for 53 ventilator-dependent children and 150 other pediatric and elderly residents.

The officials found the conditions existed from October 9 to November 19, when 11 children died in the facility during an adenovirus outbreak.



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## **The Wanaque Center for Nursing and Rehabilitation, and Pediatric Center, in Haskell, New Jersey was fined \$600,000 over conditions that may have led to a viral outbreak**

The dangerous conditions have now been corrected, officials said. The center strongly disputes the findings of the report.

Last fall, state officials were forced to admit they are struggling to contain the outbreak at the Wanaque Center.

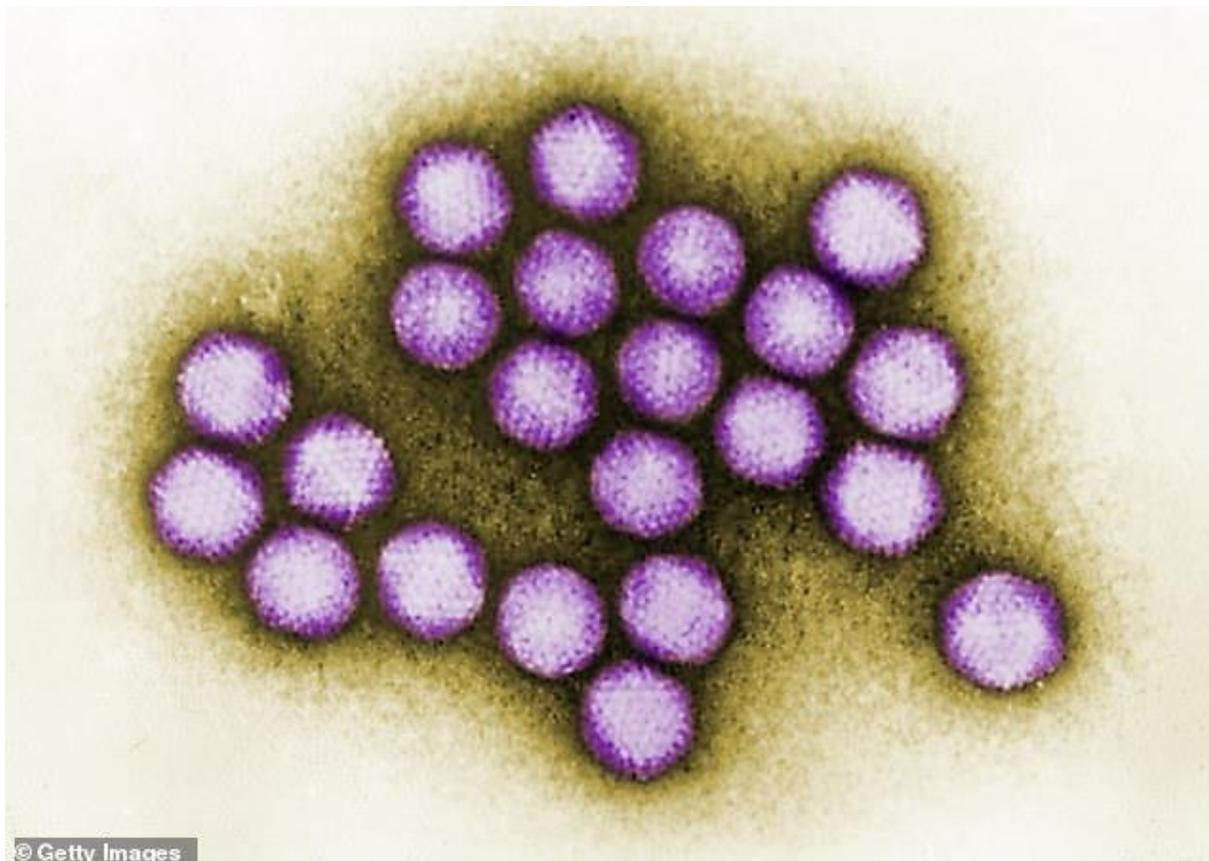
Dr. Shereef Elnahal, commissioner of the New Jersey Department of Health, told **CNN** at the time that the inability to separate those who are sick from those without symptoms has led to the outbreak.

'Up until this week, it has not been possible to completely separate those patients,' Elnahal said.

'But now, due to decreasing census at the facility, it is.'

The state put out a call for volunteers from New Jersey Medical Reserve Corps to help separate patients at the facility.

The lethal outbreak at the Wanaque Center began in late September, spreading among children with weakened immune systems.



**Adenoviruses are a group of viruses that infect the linings of the eyes, lungs, intestines, urinary tract, and nervous system. A strong strain of the virus has killed 11 children**

An investigation of Wanaque indicated that the staff's poor hand washing practices might be fueling the viral spread.

Adenovirus is, typically, a mild bug that causes the common cold.

The virus infects the respiratory system, causing a sore throat, chest and throat congestion, coughing, pink eye and fever.

But the virus acts very similarly to the flu, and is often mistaken for it.

In fact, adenovirus can feel even worse than the flu. Like most bugs, it has many different strains with different strengths.

The type that struck the Wanaque Center in New Jersey is adenovirus seven.

This strain in particular is known to prove deadly in some cases.

The virus spreads in droplets expelled into the air or onto surfaces from coughs, sneezes or tears.

But even wiping down potentially contaminated areas only goes so far against adenovirus. It is notoriously stubborn against disinfectant sprays and wipes.

In October, the Health Department sent a inspectors to Wanaque and University Hospitals.

At Wanaque, the team found that staff members were not properly washing their hands.

Because the virus is stubborn and resistant to antimicrobial chemicals, the best way to minimize its spread is through 'mechanically' removing it from the skin through the physical act of scrubbing.

Adenovirus is among a group of diseases in the so-called North Atlantic Oscillation indices.

The climate may play a role in its spread. Along with measles, viral meningitis and gastroenteritis, cases of adenovirus increased in Europe when temperatures were higher and it rained more, according to a 2013 study.

In October, the average temperature for the month in New Jersey was 57.4F and the average daily precipitation is 3.68 inches.

Last year's temperatures and October rainfall were closely in line with these averages, but there was some kind of precipitation 32 days that month. Normally, it only rains about nine days in October in New Jersey.

A wetter climate may help explain higher rates of the flu-like infection in the general population, but it didn't explain what's happening to the children in health facilities.

The New Jersey Health Department says that that is on the facilities and health officials in general.

'We also need to think about whether there is more we can do as healthcare leaders to protect immunocompromised children, such as those served at Wanaque Center,' said Elnahal.

'Every year in the state, there are hundreds of outbreaks at healthcare facilities,' but better training for outbreak containment might help to reduce the deaths that come with viral spreads in these settings.

Original story link: <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-6764609/New-Jersey-care-facility-fined-600-000-11-children-died-fall-viral-outbreak.html>

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