

# St. Lucie County Glioblastoma Community Concern FAQ

Please note that this document will be updated and revised as new information is received.

- **How do you track cancer cases in the state, and how is the information used?**
  - The Florida Cancer Data System is Florida's legislatively mandated, population-based, statewide cancer registry. The Florida Cancer Data System is a joint project of the Florida Department of Health and the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine. Florida Statute 385.202 requires that each hospital and outpatient facility licensed in Florida report to the Florida Department of Health each patient admitted for treatment of cancer. Information to be reported on each patient include routine personal and demographic data, diagnosis, stage of disease at diagnosis, medical history, laboratory data, tissue diagnosis, and initial course of treatment. The Florida Cancer Data System is utilized by the State and its partners to monitor the occurrence of cancer incidence and mortality, to aid in research studies to reduce cancer morbidity and mortality, to focus cancer control activities, and to address public questions and concerns regarding cancer. For example, it can tell us whether suspected cancer concerns reported by people in a community actually involve a higher-than-expected number of cancer cases, based on the experience of comparable communities or groups of people. However, it can't tell us, by itself, whether a particular hazard or cancer-causing agent is causing a cancer cluster.
  
- **What's causing this cluster?**
  - Brain cancer is a frightening diagnosis and we recognize it is very traumatic to have multiple people fall ill with glioblastoma in a community, however the number of cases identified to date in St. Lucie County is not different from what we see in other parts of Florida, in other words, we do not have any indication the St. Lucie County community has a cancer cluster. A cancer cluster is defined as a greater than expected number of cancer cases that occurs within a group of people in a defined geographic area over a specified period of time. More information the criteria for a cancer cluster can be found at the following website (<http://www.floridahealth.gov/diseases-and-conditions/cancer/cancer-registry/cancer-concerns/index.html>).
  
- **Isn't it strange that some cases are on the same street?**
  - Cancer, unfortunately, is a common disease. Current information shows that approximately one out of three Americans will develop cancer in their lifetime, and cancer will affect three out of four families. The risk of developing cancer increases with age (with the increased risk starting at age 40), so as the population ages, more cases of cancer are expected in our communities. Cancer as any other chronic condition can occur in a neighborhood with a pattern and without a pattern.
  
- **How long have these cases been investigated? What are your findings so far?**
  - The cancer concern inquiry started in March 2018. The review has found that the occurrence of glioblastoma cancer in all local areas in St. Lucie County mirrored what is to be expected given the population size and demographics. On average, each year there were 10 new glioblastoma cases for the entire St. Lucie County reported to the Florida Cancer Data System during 1996 to 2015. The majority of these cases were reported among adults age 60 or older.

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- **How is the Florida Department of Health working to identify cases that were not diagnosed in Florida?**
  - The Florida Department of Health is working with reporting facilities in St. Lucie County and surrounding counties to ensure all of the cancer cases for 2016 and 2017 have been accounted for and are included in the registry. The department is also working to obtain residential history for all glioblastoma cases in Florida and will have all the glioblastoma cases identified in the Florida Cancer Registry by November 2018.
- **How will the Florida Department of Health account for people who lived in the neighborhood and moved out of the neighborhood?**
  - The Florida Department of Health is working to obtain residential history for all glioblastoma cases in Florida to account for people who are previous residents of the neighborhood(s) included in the community concern.
- **Is the Florida Department of Health looking at multiple cancers within the same geographic area of concern?**
  - Science has identified more than a hundred different kinds of cancer, many of which have different—and most of the time, unknown—causes. Some cancer-causing agents, such as tobacco, cause more than one kind of cancer. If people in your group or community have many different kinds of cancer, it's less likely that they were caused by the same thing.
- **“What is the number of cases or threshold that we would have to reach to become a cluster?”**
  - Cancer clusters may be suspected when people report that several family members, friends, neighbors, or coworkers have been diagnosed with the same or related cancer(s). The National Cancer Institute, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and other public health agencies use the following definition: “A cancer cluster is a greater than expected number of cancer cases that occurs within a group of people or a geographic area over a defined period of time.”
  - The Florida Statewide Cancer Registry has taken factors such as age, race, and sex in your community and compared the cancer rates with similar communities. Given recent community concern, the FCDS conducted a local-level assessment of glioblastoma cancer occurrence (i.e. number of cases) among Florida residents diagnosed between 1996 and 2015 in St. Lucie County to better understand the existing pattern of this cancer. From this assessment, no statistically significant excess of glioblastoma was found in any of the local areas of St. Lucie County. This assessment also showed that the occurrence of glioblastoma cancer in all local areas in St. Lucie County mirrored what is to be expected given the population size and demographics. On average, each year there were 10 new glioblastoma cases for the entire St. Lucie County reported to the FCDS during the time period from 1996 to 2015. The majority of these cases were reported among adults age 60 or older.
  - A known environmental exposure would need to be identified in order for the community concern to warrant a cancer cluster. Current research has shown that there is not a known carcinogen for glioblastoma.

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- **What is the timeline for the view of glioblastoma in St. Lucie County?**
  - The Florida Department of Health is working through a process to appropriately identify all glioblastoma as well as historical residential information. This review will span over several years of data, and will take several months. The department will have all the glioblastoma cases identified by November 2018.
- **Who should I contact to report my diagnosis of cancer?**
  - Individuals diagnosed with cancer in Florida are included in the Florida Cancer Registry. If you feel the need to ensure that your record is in the Florida Cancer Registry you would need to provide patient identifiable information such as full name and date of birth to the appropriate Florida Department of Health in St. Lucie County staff. Any information captured in this self-report would be confidential and would be maintained securely. This confidential information would only be used for the purpose of responding to this community concern.
- **Who should I contact regarding concerns about city water supply contaminations?**
  - The Bureau of Environmental Health and the Florida Department of Health in St. Lucie County are working with the Florida Department of Environmental Protection to evaluate the public drinking water supplies and their testing over the past decade. These facilities are required to perform extensive chemical and biological testing every quarter. Areas with confirmed glioblastoma cases will be the top priority for evaluation.
- **What will it take before water testing is done?**
  - Since the majority of St. Lucie County is served by public water, potable water sources are already required to be tested extensively. After the Florida Department of Health, in collaboration with the Florida Department of Environmental Protection evaluates the testing data, areas of additional testing will be identified and tested in support of water quality standards.
- **What types of water testing is available?**
  - The Florida Department of Environmental Protection has the primary role of regulating public water systems in Florida. All public water systems are required to periodically test the water served to the public for contamination. The different types of contaminants are divided into groups.
  - These include: Inorganic, Microbiological, Synthetic Organic, Volatile Organic and Miscellaneous Contaminants and Radionuclides and Secondary Drinking Water Standards (see: <https://floridadep.gov/water/source-drinking-water/content/standards-and-health-effects-drinking-water-contaminants>)
  - If a residence is served by a private well, water testing and upkeep of the water well is the responsibility of the owner. The Florida Department of Health does have a program that can help a private owner determine whether their potable water is at risk. (<http://www.floridahealth.gov/environmental-health/private-well-testing/index.html>)
- **How do I sample my well water?**
  - If you have a private well and think that it might be affected by contamination from a nearby factory, gas station, or other sources, please contact the Florida

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Department of Health in St. Lucie County. They can help you evaluate the risk to your water supply and if needed, will test your water at no cost.

- **Is the Health Department testing air, soil, water?**
  - The Florida Department of Health is not currently testing the environment for contaminants. The Florida Department of Health is working with the Florida Department of Environmental Protection to identify sources of contamination in your community. Many facilities are required to test the environment around their property and submit testing results to the Florida Department of Environmental Protection to ensure safe operation. If needed, additional sampling will be done to ensure there is a good understanding of the environmental conditions in your community.
- **Are there private consultant companies that test air/ water/ soil?**
  - Yes. There are many private firms that test the environment.
- **Is water quality info available online?**
  - Yes. The United States Environmental Protection Agency has an online portal that can be used to find this type of information. See: <https://echo.epa.gov/?redirect=echo>. The Florida Department of Health along with the Florida Department of Environmental Protection is working to streamline the way people can get information on their drinking water quality.
- **Is there proactive testing of drinking water being done?**
  - See above for testing of public drinking water systems.
- **Is it safe to drink my well water?**
  - If you have a private well and think that it might be affected by contamination from a nearby factory, gas station, or other sources, please contact the Florida Department of Health in St. Lucie County. They can help you evaluate the risk to your water supply and if needed, will test your water at no cost.
- **Who should I contact regarding concerns about city water supply contaminations?**
  - A public water system provides water for human consumption through pipes or other constructed conveyances to at least 15 service connections or serves an average of at least 25 people for at least 60 days a year.
  - These public water systems are regulated under the U.S. Safe Drinking Water Act (<https://www.epa.gov/sdwa>). The Act is carried out in Florida by the Department of Environmental Protection (<https://floridadep.gov/water/source-drinking-water>).
  - These facilities are required to perform extensive chemical and biological testing every quarter. Any violations are required to be fixed so that they come into compliance with drinking water standards.
  - You can directly contact your utility for further information on their testing data.
  - Water Quality Reports can be found on the following websites:
    - The Port St. Lucie Water: <http://www.stlucieco.gov/departments-services/a-z/utilities/water-supply>.

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- St. Lucie West Service District Water Quality:  
<https://www.slwsd.org/index.php/2014-12-06-11-28-20/water-quality-report>.
- Fort Pierce Utilities Authority Water:  
<http://www.fpu.com/Information/WaterQualityReports.aspx>
- **What will it take before water testing is done?**
  - Most of St. Lucie County is served by a public water system. If you pay a bill for drinking water, you are served by a public water system. As mentioned above, these facilities are required to perform testing extensively on their drinking water.
  - If a residence is served by a private well, water testing and upkeep of the water well is the responsibility of the owner. The Florida Department of Health has a program that can help a private owner determine whether their potable water is at risk. (<http://www.floridahealth.gov/environmental-health/private-well-testing/index.html>)
- **What types of testing are available?**
  - Public water supplies are required to be tested for a wide variety of compounds including heavy metals, volatile organics, pesticides and biological contaminants.
  - If a residence is served by a private well, water testing and upkeep of the water well is the responsibility of the owner. The Florida Department of Health has a program that can help a private owner determine whether their potable water is at risk. (<http://www.floridahealth.gov/environmental-health/private-well-testing/index.html>)
- **How do I sample my well water?**
  - The Florida Department of Health has a program that can help a private owner determine whether their potable water is at risk. (<http://www.floridahealth.gov/environmental-health/private-well-testing/index.html>)
- **Do YOU drink YOUR tap water at home?**
  - Yes. Public facilities are required to perform extensive chemical and biological testing. The quality of the tap water from a public water supply is higher than from most other sources.
- **What is Radon and how do we check for it?**
  - Radon comes from the breakdown of naturally occurring radium found in most soils. As a gas in the soil, it enters buildings through small openings in the foundation. Radon can damage your lungs and even cause cancer. Health effects from radon are more serious for those who smoke. Testing for radon is the only reliable way to find out if there are elevated levels in your home. It's easy and you can do the test yourself. Best of all, by using a coupon on this web site, ([http://www.floridahealth.gov/environmental-health/radon/\\_documents/florida-radon-testkit-coupon.pdf](http://www.floridahealth.gov/environmental-health/radon/_documents/florida-radon-testkit-coupon.pdf)) it's free. You can also get a radon test kit at your local hardware store for less than \$15.00.

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- **What is radon? Is radon harmful? How can I test for radon in my home?**
  - Radon comes from the breakdown of naturally occurring radium found in most soils. As a gas in the soil, it enters buildings through small openings in the foundation. Testing for radon is the only reliable way to find out if there are elevated levels in your home. It's easy and you can do the test yourself. Best of all, by using a coupon on this web site, (<http://www.floridahealth.gov/environmental-health/radon/documents/florida-radon-testkit-coupon.pdf>) it's free. You can also get a radon test kit at your local hardware store for less than \$15.00.
  - There are many types of home filters available to test for radon; however, none remove all types of chemicals in drinking water. The Florida Department of Health recommends that you follow the manufacturer's directions for maintenance and upkeep.
- **Is my home susceptible to radon? Are older homes more susceptible to radon?**
  - The Florida Department of Health recommends that homes in Florida be tested for radon. See above for more information on how to test.
- **Why is radon more common in some areas vs. other areas?**
  - Radon comes from certain types of geology in Florida. You can find more information on radon at: <http://www.floridahealth.gov/environmental-health/radon/radon-faq.html>
- **Should I have my water tested for radiation?**
  - Basic testing for radiation is recommended annually. If you live in an area that is known for Naturally Occurring Radioactive Materials (NORM) in groundwater, then it is recommended that testing is also completed for gross alpha.
- **Does the Florida Department of Health test at dumps and landfills?**
  - No. That is the responsibility of the Florida Department of Environmental Protection.
- **Is there an association between cellular phone use and cancer?**
  - At this time, there is very little evidence to support the idea that exposure to cellular phones are associated with cancer.

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## References

- Information regarding testing on well water: <https://www.epa.gov/privatewells>
- Florida Department of Environmental Protection regulations regarding powerlines: <https://floridadep.gov/air/siting-coordination-office>
- For information on Blue-green algae concerns, please see the Florida Department of Health's web site: <http://www.floridahealth.gov/environmental-health/aquatic-toxins/cyanobacteria.html>
- For information on Blue-green algae concerns, please see the Florida Department of Health's website: <http://www.floridahealth.gov/environmental-health/swimming-pools/index.html>
- For more information on cellular phone use and cancer risk please visit the following web site: <https://www.cancer.org/cancer/cancer-causes/radiation-exposure/cellular-phone-towers.html>