

What is a Cancer Cluster? How New Jersey Investigates Community Health Concerns

05/15/26

What is a Cancer Cluster? How New Jersey Investigates Community Health Concerns

In Keyport, New Jersey, a noticeable number of cancer diagnoses along First Street has raised alarm among residents. One former neighbor even mapped the cases, marking dozens of affected homes. For many families, the question is unavoidable, is this a coincidence or something in the environment?

Situations like this are often called “cancer clusters.” While the term can be unsettling, understanding what it means and how these concerns are evaluated can help communities respond more clearly and effectively.

What is a Cancer Cluster?

A cancer cluster is a higher-than-expected number of cancer cases within a defined area or group over a certain time period. These cases often share common factors, such as location, cancer type, or timing of diagnosis.

Not every apparent cluster is confirmed. Cancer is common and influenced by age, genetics, and lifestyle, so patterns can sometimes occur by chance. However, when numbers exceed expected ranges, health officials may investigate further.

How New Jersey Investigates Cancer Cluster Concerns

In New Jersey, potential cancer clusters are reviewed by the New Jersey Department of Health (NJDOH), often through the [New Jersey State Cancer Registry](#).

Investigations typically involve an initial review of reported cases, locations, and timelines. Next, a data analysis comparing local cancer rates to state and national averages, and finally, an environmental review to assess potential factors such as soil, air, or groundwater contamination.

These reviews are public health–focused and are not designed to assign legal blame or compensation.

Why Keyport Has Drawn Attention

Keyport has become a notable example of how community concern can escalate into a broader health investigation. Dozens of cancer cases, many near [First Street](#), have been reported, with new diagnoses still emerging. Some residents and advocates have raised concerns about the nearby Aeromarine landfill as a potential source of exposure.

Wilentz Is Investigating the Keyport Cancer Claims

Unusual cancer patterns may signal environmental risks and deserve attention. Understanding how clusters are evaluated is an important step in protecting both health and legal rights. If you have questions about the [Keyport cancer cluster investigation](#) or believe you may be affected, contact a member of our Mass Tort/Class Action team.

Attorneys

- Lynne M. Kizis
- Joseph Carlo

Practices

- Toxic Exposures
- Class Action