

Sewage monitoring could give early warning of fresh coronavirus outbreaks

Scientists in Spain are expecting to begin regularly analyzing sewage for traces of the coronavirus that causes COVID-19, *The Scientist* has learned. ...

It will involve the twice-weekly collection of samples from more than 250 wastewater treatment plants, says lead researcher [Pilar Domingo-Calap](#), a biologist at the University of Valencia. Already, her team is sampling from 20 facilities in a preliminary phase of the project.

Previously, Domingo-Calap and colleagues had reported the discovery of SARS-CoV-2 traces circulating in Valencian wastewater that had been sampled on February 24—around the time the first COVID-19 cases were officially confirmed in mainland Spain. ...

It's one of the first such programs to be planned on a large scale. In recent months, various researchers in several countries including the US, Switzerland, Italy, the Netherlands, and France have all reported the detection of SARS-CoV-2 in wastewater, suggesting that sewage monitoring could allow authorities to detect fresh outbreaks and keep an eye on existing ones.

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Wastewater detection involves taking small samples of untreated sewage, which may contain traces of the SARS-CoV-2 virus. The samples are not thought to contain infectious virus particles but rather viral RNA... .

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