

Poop detection is the latest ‘cutting-edge’ test to protect returning college students from COVID

The [University of Arizona] is regularly screening the sewage from each dorm, searching for traces of the virus.

On [September 3], officials said the technique worked — and possibly prevented a sizable outbreak on campus. When a wastewater sample from one dorm came back positive this week, the school quickly tested all 311 people who live and work there and found two asymptomatic students who tested positive. They were quickly quarantined.

“With this early detection, we jumped on it right away, tested those youngsters, and got them the appropriate isolation where they needed to be,” said Richard Carmona, a former U.S. surgeon general who is directing the school’s reentry task force, [in a news conference](#).

Researchers around the world have been studying whether wastewater testing can effectively catch cases early to prevent covid-19 clusters. There are programs in Singapore, China, Spain, Canada and New Zealand, while in the United States, [more than 170 wastewater facilities](#) across 37 states are being tested.

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Carmona said without the sewage testing, those two asymptomatic students could have spread the virus far before it was detected.

“You think about if we had missed it, if we had waited until they became symptomatic and they stayed in that dorm for days, or a week, or the whole incubation period, how many other people would have been infected?” he said.

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