

Is Rare Meningitis Outbreak a Sign of the End Times?

Last year it was dead birds and fish. Now it's an outbreak of a rare form of meningitis that health officials say could spread. Twenty-six people in five states have already contracted the disease. Four are dead.

Meningitis is an inflammation of the membranes (meninges) surrounding your brain and spinal cord, usually due to the spread of an infection, according to Mayo Clinic. The hospital reports that the swelling associated with meningitis often triggers the "hallmark" signs and symptoms of this condition, including headache, fever and a stiff neck in anyone over the age of 2. Most cases of meningitis are caused by a viral infection, Mayo says, but bacterial and fungal infections also can lead to meningitis.

The Associated Press reports:

All received steroid injections, mostly for back pain, a fairly typical treatment. The drug was made by a specialty pharmacy in Massachusetts that issued a recall last week and has shut down operations.

The type of meningitis involved is not contagious like the more common forms. This type is caused by a fungus often found in leaf mold and which health officials suspect may have been in the steroid.

Eighteen of the cases are in Tennessee, where a Nashville clinic received the largest shipment of the steroid. Investigators, though, say they are still trying to confirm the source of the infection.

More new cases are almost certain to appear in the coming days, said Tennessee Department of Health Commissioner John

Dreyzehner. Five new cases were confirmed over the past 24 hours, he said Wednesday, calling the situation a “rapidly evolving outbreak.”

What’s going on here? Conspiracy theorists might say someone has polluted the medical supply. Others may see it as a fluke. Still others a sign of the times as Jesus predicted “There will be great earthquakes, famines and pestilences in various places, and fearful events and great signs from heaven” (Luke 21:11 NIV).

What do you think? With more rare diseases making headlines in recent months, is this a sign of the end times?