

# Legionnaires Disease

## Our Medical Director cares about your health and safety

Legionnaires Disease is a respiratory infection caused by Legionella bacteria and commonly causes pneumonia in affected individuals. These bacteria are found naturally in the environment, but most commonly, human infections result from Legionella bacteria found in water. These bacteria grow best in warm water often found in:

- Hot tubs
- Large plumbing systems
- Cooling towers
- Decorative fountains
- Hot water tanks
- Pools

Symptoms of Legionella infection usually occur between 2-14 days after exposure and symptoms may include the following:

- Cough
- Shortness of breath
- Abdominal pain
- High fever
- Diarrhea
- Muscle aches
- Nausea
- Headaches
- Vomiting

Legionnaires' disease occurs when persons breathe in a mist or vapor (small droplets of water in the air) containing the bacteria. These bacteria commonly settle in the lungs. This may happen, for example, when a hot tub or pool has not been properly cleaned and disinfected. Most people with Legionnaires ' Disease will have pneumonia since the *Legionella* bacteria grow and thrive in the lungs.

The bacteria are not spread between people, therefore, a person diagnosed with Legionnaires ' Disease is not a threat to other family members or coworkers. If the workplace may be the infection's source, the local health department should be contacted.

Legionnaires' Disease is evaluated, diagnosed and treated by a physician with antibiotics and needed supportive care. Individuals with other health issues, the very young and the elderly are at a greater risk of complications. Those who have been diagnosed and treated for Legionnaire's Disease may return to work when released by their physician.

High water temperatures may make the maintenance of appropriate disinfectant levels in hot tubs and pools difficult to maintain. Therefore, it is essential the correct disinfectant, level of heat and pH of the water is monitored and maintained. Documentation from the manufacturer should provide the appropriate cleaning and maintenance information.

For more information, call your health care provider or your local health department.

Russell L Bush, MD, MPH  
Medical Director  
C.S. Mott Community College  
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