

FACT SHEET

Legionnaires' Disease

What is Legionnaires' Disease?

Legionnaires' Disease is a bacterial disease caused by *Legionella* that results in a severe, sometimes life-threatening, pneumonia.

This disease occurs most frequently in older individuals, with most cases diagnosed in people over age 50. People prone to infection include smokers, those with suppressed immune systems, and those who have chronic illnesses such as diabetes, kidney disease, and lung disease.

How is it spread?

This disease is airborne and results when someone inhales the aerosolized bacteria from an infected water source. These water sources can include air-conditioning cooling towers, hot water systems, hot tubs, humidifiers, showerheads, and sink faucets. Legionnaires' disease is not spread by people.

How is it prevented?

Preventing Legionnaires' disease requires reducing the risk of *Legionella* growth and spread. This includes properly maintaining building water systems, using an adequate amount of disinfectant in hot tubs, properly maintaining decorative fountains, and cleaning faucets and showerheads.

What are the symptoms?

Symptoms usually begin 2-10 days after exposure. Symptoms may include:

- Headache
- Lack of appetite
- Fatigue or exhaustion
- High fever (102 – 105 °F)
- Other signs of pneumonia
- Non-productive cough
- Chest pain
- Rapid or labored breathing

How is it treated?

Legionnaires' Disease can be life threatening and often requires hospitalization. Seek medical attention immediately if you suspect you may be infected. Antibiotics may be required. Early diagnosis and prompt treatment helps to ensure a better response to therapy and may assist public health officials in identifying the source of infection.

This fact sheet is for informational purposes only and is not intended for self-diagnosis or as a substitute for consultation with a health care provider. For more information contact your health care provider or visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at www.cdc.gov.

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