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# Legionnaires' Disease

## *What You Need to Know*



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### **What is Legionnaires' Disease?**

Legionnaires' Disease (Legionellosis) is a respiratory infection (pneumonia) caused by bacteria called *Legionella*.

### **Who can get Legionnaires' Disease?**

Anyone can get Legionnaires' Disease. People at highest risk are 50 years and older, as well as those who smoke or have chronic lung disease. Also at risk are persons with weakened immune systems, such as people with cancer, diabetes, kidney disease, transplant recipients, and those taking certain medications such as tumor necrosis factor alpha inhibitors.

### **What are the symptoms of Legionnaires' Disease?**

- Fever (typically between 102-105 degrees)
- Chills
- Cough
- Shortness of breath
- Muscle aches
- Headache

Other common symptoms include:

- Confusion
- Nausea
- Diarrhea
- Chest pain

### **How long after exposure do symptoms begin?**

2-10 days after exposure, though it can take up to 2 weeks for symptoms to appear after exposure.

### **How is Legionnaires' Disease spread?**

People get Legionnaires' Disease when they breathe in droplets of water in the air that contain the bacteria. Common sources of exposure include:

- Cooling towers (large building air conditioning systems)
- Whirlpool spas and hot tubs
- Hot water tanks
- Decorative fountains
- Showers

People can be exposed inside or outside of buildings. Home and car air conditioners do not use water to cool the air, so they do not pose a risk for Legionella growth.

### **How long is a person contagious?**

The bacteria are not spread from one person to another, so there is no contagious period.

### **Are there complications?**

Legionnaires' Disease can be very serious and can cause death in 10% to 25% of cases. Most healthy people usually recover.

### **Is there a treatment for Legionnaires' Disease?**

The prompt diagnosis of Legionnaires' Disease can save lives. Antibiotics are used to treat Legionnaires' Disease.

### **How can Legionnaires' Disease be prevented?**

To prevent Legionnaires' Disease, make sure water systems in buildings are maintained. Examples of water systems include cooling towers, large plumbing systems, hot tubs, and hot water tanks and heaters.

Talk to your doctor if you believe you were exposed to Legionella and develop symptoms such as fever, cough, chills, or muscle aches.



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800.848.5533 NOC@OAKGOV.COM  
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