

What is Legionnaires' disease?

Legionnaires' disease (Legionellosis) is a respiratory infection (pneumonia) caused by bacteria called Legionella. This bacteria is found naturally in freshwater environments.

Who is most at risk of getting Legionnaires' disease?

Anyone can get Legionnaires' disease, but people at highest risk of getting sick are:

- 50 years and older
- Current or former smokers
- Persons with a chronic lung disease or respiratory condition, such as emphysema or chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD)
- Persons with poor immune systems, such as people with cancer, diabetes, kidney disease, transplant recipients, and persons taking certain medications such as tumor necrosis factor alpha inhibitors

How can I reduce the risk of Legionnaires' disease at home?

The risk of getting Legionnaires' Disease from a home water system is low. However, there are ways to further reduce the risk, especially for immune compromised individuals.

- Stop smoking. Quitting smoking is the single most important thing you can do to lower your risk of infection. Smoking increases the chances that you will develop Legionnaires' disease if you are exposed to Legionella bacteria. For help quitting, call the Michigan Tobacco QuitLine at 1-800-QUIT-NOW.
- Use sterile, distilled, or boiled water (water that has been boiled, cooled, and placed in a clean container) for CPAP machines, nebulizers, and point-of-use humidifiers. Drain, clean, and sanitize these items, along with whole house humidifiers, regularly according to the manufacturer's directions.
- Drink and make ice with distilled or boiled water rather than tap water if you have a poor immune system or difficulty swallowing.
- Maintain hot tubs and jetted tubs properly.
 - Use test strips to ensure that hot tubs have correct disinfectant and pH levels, and make adjustments as necessary.
 - Clean and sanitize jetted tubs, including jets and nozzles, regularly according to manufacturer's directions.
- Flush hot water heaters on an annual basis or per manufacturer's recommendations, and flush hot water lines (letting them run for 2-3 minutes) on a regular basis to prevent water from sitting inactive in the lines.
- As part of routine maintenance, clean shower heads and faucet aerators (screens). Remove them and clean with dishwashing soap and water, then soak them in a solution of 1 tablespoon of unscented household bleach and 1 gallon of water for 2 hours before allowing to air dry and replacing.