

Frequently Asked Questions about LEGIONNAIRES' DISEASE

What is Legionnaires' disease?

Legionnaires' disease (or Legionellosis) is a type of pneumonia that is caused by *Legionella* bacteria.

Is the disease contagious?

No. Legionnaires' disease is not spread from person to person. People only get sick by breathing in water vapor containing the *Legionella* bacteria (for example, by inhaling contaminated mist from faucets, showers, whirlpools or cooling towers).

What are the symptoms?

The symptoms are very general at first: fevers, chills, and a cough. Some patients also have muscle aches, headache, tiredness, loss of appetite, and occasionally diarrhea. If it is Legionnaires' disease, these symptoms may progress to pneumonia. If you are feeling sick you may wish to see your health care provider for further evaluation.

Am I at risk?

Most people exposed to *Legionella* bacteria will never get sick. People at increased risk include the elderly, smokers, and those with certain medical conditions, including weakened immune systems and chronic lung disease. Even so, only a very small number of these people who are exposed will get sick. If you are feeling sick you may wish to see your health care provider for further evaluation.

What is the treatment for Legionnaires' disease?

The disease is treated with antibiotics. Most people get better with early treatment, although they may need to be hospitalized. In rare cases, people may get very sick or even die from complications of the disease.

How is the DOH responding to these cases?

The DOH continues to conduct in-depth interviews with patients to identify potential exposures and has notified healthcare providers in Sioux Falls of the increase in cases to aid in prompt diagnosis and treatment.

In addition, CDC will assist us with environmental assessments and testing to identify water sources that may contain *Legionella* bacteria.