

# PUBLIC HEALTH FACT SHEET



Department of Health & Human Services

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## Legionnaires' Disease

### What is Legionnaires' Disease?

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

### Who can get Legionnaires' Disease?

Anyone can get Legionnaires' Disease. People at highest risk are 65 years and older, as well as those who smoke or have chronic lung disease. Also at risk are persons with poor immune systems (such as people with cancer, diabetes, kidney disease, and HIV/AIDS).

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

Legionnaires' Disease is characterized by loss of appetite, extreme tiredness, and headache. Within a day of infection there is rising fever associated with chills. Temperatures commonly reach 102-105 degrees F. Pneumonia, a nonproductive cough, abdominal (stomach) pain, and diarrhea are also common symptoms.

### How long after exposure do symptoms begin?

2-14 days after exposure, averaging 5-6 days.

### How is Legionnaires' Disease spread?

People get Legionnaires' Disease when they breathe mist or vapor from a contaminated water source (e.g., building air conditioning systems, whirlpool spas, hot water tanks) that has Legionella bacteria present. People can be exposed inside or outside of buildings. The bacteria do not seem to grow in car air conditioners or household window air conditioners.

### 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 5% to 30% of cases. Most healthy people usually recover.

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

Antibiotics are used to treat Legionnaires' Disease.

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

Improved design, cleaning and maintenance of water sources such as cooling towers, evaporative condensers, and whirlpools, spas.

**For more information on Legionnaires' Disease, call (248) 858-1406 or toll free 1 (800) 848-5533.**

For additional copies, visit our website at [www.oakgov.com/health](http://www.oakgov.com/health).

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