



Health Division reports increase in Legionnaires' disease

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NEWS RELEASE

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Health Division reports increase in Legionnaires' disease

Oct. 22, 2018, Pontiac, Mich.— Oakland County Health Division reports 52 confirmed cases of Legionnaires' disease, marking an upward trend compared to 2017 when 47 cases occurred. This increased trend is also occurring statewide.

"Legionnaires' disease can be very serious," said Leigh-Anne Stafford, health officer for Oakland County Health Division. "Individuals that smoke or have chronic respiratory ailments are at higher risk of getting sick. Talk to your healthcare provider for prompt diagnosis and treatment if you think you were exposed."

Legionnaires' disease is a respiratory infection caused by breathing mist or vapors from water containing Legionella bacteria. Most healthy people exposed to Legionella don't get sick. People at higher risk of getting sick are:

- Current or former smokers
- Aged fifty years and over
- Those with chronic lung disease, such as emphysema or chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD)

- Those with a weakened immune system from diseases like cancer, diabetes, or kidney failure

Common sources of exposure to Legionella bacteria are places where warm water can be held for long periods of time, such as cooling towers, whirlpool spas and hot tubs, hot water tanks, decorative fountains, showerheads, and sink faucets. Legionnaires' disease is most common in the summer and early fall, when warm, stagnant water presents the best environment for bacterial growth in water systems.

There is no vaccine that can help protect you from Legionnaires' disease. To reduce your risk of getting sick:

-Stop smoking. For help quitting, call the Michigan Tobacco QuitLine at 1-800-QUIT-NOW.

-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.

-Use sterile, distilled, or boiled water (water that has been boiled, cooled, and placed in a clean container) for CPAP machines, nebulizers, and humidifiers.

- Drain, clean, and sanitize these items 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.

-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

Generally, people do not spread Legionnaires' disease to other people. Symptoms typically develop 2 to 14 days after exposure, and can include cough, shortness of breath, fever, muscle aches, and headaches. With the recent increase in confirmed cases, healthcare providers have prioritized testing and treatment efforts. Call your healthcare provider if you may have been exposed to Legionella bacteria or experience any symptoms.

For more information, visit www.oakgov.com/health. Nurse on Call is available to answer questions at 800-848-5533 or noc@oakgov.com, 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday – Friday. For up-to-date public health information, follow @publichealthOC on Facebook and Twitter.

FOR MEDIA INQUIRIES ONLY: Please contact Leigh-Anne Stafford, health officer for Oakland County Health Division, at 248-858-1410.



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