

Legionnaires' Disease



Infectious Disease
Epidemiology &
Prevention Division

July 2024

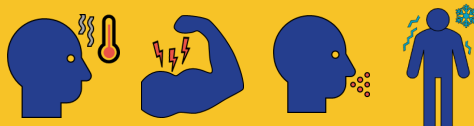
What is Legionnaires' disease?

Legionnaires' (LEE-juh-nares) disease is a serious type of pneumonia caused by *Legionella* bacteria that may lead to hospitalization or death. People can get Legionnaires' disease by breathing in mist containing *Legionella* bacteria or, in rare cases, by drinking water that contains the *Legionella* bacteria and it "goes down the wrong pipe" into the lungs.

What are the symptoms?






Symptoms of Legionnaire's disease start about 2-14 days after exposure to the bacteria. Common symptoms include:

- Pneumonia
- Fever
- Chills
- Lack of energy
- Cough
- Muscle aches
- Headache
- Loss of appetite
- Diarrhea and/or vomiting
- Shortness of breath



Who is at risk?

Healthy individuals may be exposed to the *Legionella* bacteria but may not become sick. Individuals of higher risk include:

-  Older people (usually 50 years of age or older)
-  Those with a chronic lung disease (like COPD or emphysema)
-  Current or former smokers
-  Those with a weak immune system from diseases like cancer, diabetes, or kidney failure
-  People who take medication that weakens the immune system

How do I know if I have Legionnaires' disease?

See your health care provider. Lab testing is needed to confirm diagnosis. Your health care provider may take a sample of lung tissue, urine, or fluid from the lungs to test. Legionnaires' disease is treated with antibiotics (drugs that kill bacteria in the body). Most people who become ill need care in a hospital but make a full recovery. However, about 1 out of 10 people who get Legionnaires' disease will die from the infection.

How is Legionnaires' disease spread?

Legionnaires' disease infection happens when a person breathes in water droplets from the air (i.e., mist or vapor) that contain the *Legionella* bacteria. In general, the bacteria are not spread from one person to another person. *Legionella* bacteria are also found naturally in freshwater environments and soil but become an issue when they grow and spread inside manmade settings. Common sources of infection include sinks and showers, whirlpool spas, humidifiers, and respiratory therapy equipment. Devices that are NOT a source of infection include home and car AC units.



More Information

[Centers for Diseases and Control Prevention \(CDC\) Legionella Webpage](#)

[Indiana Department of Health Legionellosis Webpage](#)