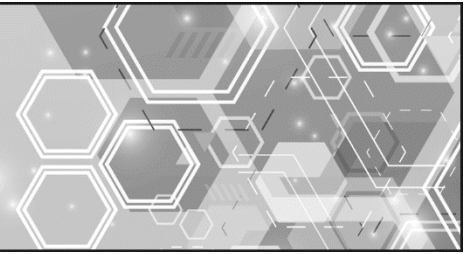




Durham Region Health Department **Facts about...**



Legionellosis

What is it?

Legionellosis is caused by a species of bacteria (gram-negative aerobic bacilli) that can cause 2 distinct illnesses: Legionnaires' Disease and Pontiac Fever.

At least 20 of the more than 60 species have been implicated in human disease, but *Legionella pneumophila* (*L. pneumophila*) is most commonly associated with disease in humans.

You can find Legionellae in aquatic environments such as rivers, lakes, ponds and soil from their banks. They like to grow in warm water (25° C to 42° C). Outbreaks and sporadic cases have been linked to air-conditioning cooling towers, evaporative condensers, humidifiers, hot tubs/whirlpool spas, respiratory therapy devices, decorative fountains, and potable water systems.

Legionellosis is a reportable disease and must be reported to the Health Department.

How is it spread?

Legionella are pathogens most commonly associated with water-droplet transmission to humans through inhalation of aerosolized contaminated water.

History of exposure to air conditioners, humidifiers, water fountains or spas and other high risk areas are considered during the 14 days prior to illness.

Illness occurs most frequently with increasing age (most cases are at least 50 years of age). Persons who smoke, have diabetes, lung, or renal disease, malignancy and compromised immunity are at most risk.

Person-to-person transmission has **not** been documented.

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905-668-2020 or 1-800-841-2729 | durham.ca/health

If you require this information in an accessible format, contact 1-800-841-2729.



What do I look for?

For Legionnaires' disease you may start to feel sick 2-10 days from exposure, but most often 5-6 days, but can be up to 19 days. It is characterized by anorexia, malaise, myalgia, headache, productive cough, temperature > 39 degrees Celsius, pneumonia, confusion, chills, nausea, and diarrhea.

For Pontiac Fever, you may start to feel sick 5-72 hours, most often 24-48 hours, after exposure. Pontiac Fever is a milder form of the illness without pneumonia. It is characterized by flu-like symptoms - malaise, myalgia, headache, productive cough, and temperature > 37.5 degrees Celsius.

How is it treated?

Treatment is under the direction of the attending health care provider.

How can I protect myself?

- Avoidance of exposure to aerosolized contaminated water.
- Appropriate maintenance and disinfection of household appliances such as hot water heaters, shower heads and faucets, spas and pools, home humidifiers, and respiratory equipment
- Follow the manufacturer's instructions for use and maintenance of these appliances
- Adequate treatment of water supplies
- Circulate water in household appliances and taps so water doesn't stagnate; remove limescale deposited on taps

More information can be obtained from

Durham Health Connection Line
905-668-2020 or 1-800-841-2729

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