

Legionellosis

FACTSHEET

Legionnaires' Disease or Pontiac Fever

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What is Legionellosis?

Legionellosis is a bacterial infection. The disease has two distinct forms; Legionnaires' disease, the more severe form of the infection that includes pneumonia, and Pontiac fever, a milder disease that is not associated with pneumonia.

Who gets Legionellosis?

People of any age may get Legionellosis. Legionnaires' Disease most often affects middle-aged and older persons, especially those who smoke cigarettes or have chronic lung disease. Individuals with chronic diseases such as diabetes, renal failure or those who are immunocompromised are also at increase risk. Legionnaires' disease affects men more often than women and while it can occur anytime during the year, it is more common in summer and autumn.

What are the symptoms of Legionellosis?

Persons with Legionnaires' disease usually have fever (102-105), chills, and a cough. The cough may be dry or produce sputum (phlegm). Some people also have muscle aches, headache, tiredness, loss of appetite, and occasionally diarrhea. Persons with Pontiac fever experience fever and body aches and do not have pneumonia.

How is Legionellosis spread?

Legionellosis is spread by breathing in mists that come from a water source such as air conditioning cooling towers, whirlpool spas, and showers contaminated with the bacteria. Persons may be exposed to these mists in homes,

workplaces, hospitals or public places. Legionellosis is not passed from person to person, and there is no evidence of persons becoming infected from auto air conditioners or household window air-conditioning units.

How soon do symptoms appear?

Symptoms of Legionnaires' disease appear 2 to 10 days after the person has been exposure. The symptoms of Pontiac fever are shorter, generally a few hours to 2 days.

Is a person with Legionellosis contagious?

No, a person with Legionellosis is not contagious. The disease cannot be passed from person to person.

How is Legionellosis treated?

Legionellosis can be treated with a variety of antibiotics. Persons with Pontiac fever require no specific treatment.

Should a person with Legionellosis be isolated?

No, it is not necessary to isolate a person with Legionellosis since it is not passed from person to person.

Want more information?

Information about Legionellosis and other related health topics can be found at the website www.cdc.gov. The DC Department of Health promotes the health and safety of the District residents. For additional information, please call 202-442-9371.

