

HAGERSTOWN, MD - A potentially dangerous bacteria has caused a health scare at an assisted living facility in Hagerstown.

A resident tested positive for the bacteria and is now in the hospital. One of the 85 residents at the Loyaltan Assisted-Living Facility tested positive for Legionella, a bacterial disease that can lead to Legionnaires, a type of pneumonia that can be deadly.

"It can be very serious, and in that case, we want to make sure that surveillance and an investigation is conducted so that we can determine the source of the exposure," said Elizabeth Nuckles, Communicable Disease Program Manager of the Washington County Health Department.

"They are not sure if it was contracted here or outside the facility, so they have done some water testing here," said Catherine Flournoy, Marketing Director at Loyaltan of Hagerstown.

The health department is having tests run on the water because the water is typically where the bacteria are found.

However, because the results could take up to two weeks, Loyaltan hired a contractor who said the results will be in by Friday. In the meantime, the facility has stocked up on bottled water.

"They're using the bottled water for drinking, brushing their teeth, taking sponge baths, and things like that," said Flournoy.

Staff at Loyaltan said its residents have been understanding during a situation that it has never before experienced.

According to the health department, people with lowered immune systems are more at risk for contracting the Legionnaires' disease.

The term Legionnaires' comes from the first reported occurrence of the disease that was during an American Legion Convention in Philadelphia back in 1976.