

4 LA Fitness patrons contract Legionnaires' disease, officials say

3 cases reported at L.A. Fitness on Silver Star in Ocoee in April

ORANGE COUNTY, Fla. - The Florida Department of Health has confirmed four cases of Legionnaires' disease at two LA Fitness gyms in Orange County.

The cases were linked to gyms on Kirkman Road near MetroWest in Orange County and on Orange Blossom Trail in Hunter's Creek.

"That kind of annoys me," Tony Smith said. "My health is a top priority."

Smith said he has been going to LA Fitness for more than a year, and now he's concerned about getting sick.

"They're always running out of soap, and they don't have proper paper towels so you can wash your hands," Smith said.

Health inspectors went to the locations on Friday and found conditions were favorable for the bacteria. Officials said the outbreaks occurred at the Kirkman location in late May and the Hunter's Creek location in either late February or late May.

Showers and the spas at both locations were in need of treatment with a hydrochlorinated solution, officials said.

This week's outbreak marks the third LA Fitness location in the area that was found in recent months to have favorable conditions for the disease. In April,

the Florida Department of Health confirmed three cases of the disease from people who were all members of the LA Fitness on Silver Star Road in Ocoee.

One woman said her husband got sick recently. She said she believes it happened after he used the gym.

"He's 37 years old -- (a) very healthy man, never had any type of disease," Malinda Capi said. "For him to spontaneously get pneumonia and work out here every single day ..."

Previously, the disease was found at the LA Fitness on Michigan Street and Conway Road in 2008 and at the Waterford Lakes location in 2010.

Legionnaires' disease is spread by the Legionella bacteria, which, according to Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, can grow and multiply in various parts of a building's water system.

The CDC said the bacteria grows best in warm water and can cause pneumonia-like symptoms, cough, shortness of breath, muscle aches, fever and headaches. Symptoms can show up as many as 10 days after exposure.

The CDC said people with the highest risk are 50 years or older, or people who have a weak immune system.

"He's always drinking water out of the faucet here," Capi said of her husband. "They didn't build the facilities correctly, or something isn't right."

Now, the Health Department said all those areas need to be treated, and showers and spas will be closed until further notice.

"I've never seen any signs of any sickness or bacteria that they found," Smith said. "They should at least inform the members."

News 6 reached out to LA Fitness about the bacteria claims, but have not heard back.

The four infected people are reportedly getting treatment.

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