



Three people confirmed positive for Legionella in Plant City
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One dead, two sick from Legionnaires' disease in Plant City

The Hillsborough County Health Department (HCHD) announced Monday that three residents of the Meadows at Countrywood retirement mobile home park in Plant City were confirmed infected with Legionnaires' disease. One of the residents has died from the bacterial infection.

The Hillsborough County Health Department has closed the pool and hot tub in the mobile home park while the investigation continues.

According to HCHD spokesperson, Steve Huard, "We're trying to determine if the folks who have Legionnaires were in the same area. At the same time anything that would link them back to a source so we can discover what caused the illness."

In addition, Huard said none of the three lived in the same home.

Legionnaires' disease gained national notoriety in 1976 when the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) discovered it during an epidemic of pneumonia among American legion members at a convention in Philadelphia.

The causative organism is the bacteria, Legionella pneumophila. The legionella bacteria are found throughout nature, because of this most people become exposed to it but few develop symptoms.

The primary place in nature it's found is water sources particularly at warmer temperatures; lakes, rivers and moist soil.

It is also found in man-made facilities (frequently the source of outbreaks) such as air-conditioning ducts and cooling towers, humidifiers, whirlpools and hospital equipment.

People get exposed through inhaling infectious aerosols from these water sources. There is no transmission from person to person.

The infection can appear in two clinical forms: Legionnaires' disease and Pontiac fever.

Both conditions are characterized by headache, fever, body aches and occasionally abdominal pain and diarrhea.

Legionnaires' disease is the cause of pneumonia where a non-productive cough is typical. Fatality rates of this form of the infection are around 15 % even with improvements in treatment.

Pontiac fever is a self-limiting flu-like illness that does not progress to pneumonia or death. Diagnosis is usually made by typical symptoms in an outbreak setting.

Diagnosis of Legionnaires' disease depends on identifying the bacteria in microbiological culture, detecting the antigen in urine samples or a fourfold increase in antibody titer.

Certain health conditions make you more susceptible to infection to include increasing age, smoking, chronic lung disease, malignancy and diabetes mellitus.

Legionnaires' disease is treatable with antibiotics.

To following things can be done as preventive measures: cooling towers should be drained when not in use and cleaned to remove scale and sediment and biocides can be used to limit bacterial growth. Tap water should not be used in respiratory therapy devices.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), "Each year, between 8,000 and 18,000 people are hospitalized with Legionnaires' disease in the U.S. However, many infections are not diagnosed or reported, so this number may be higher." There is a 5% to 30% of mortality rate for those infected.

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