

# Two patients at Corrections hospital diagnosed with Legionella bacteria

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The bacteria that can cause Legionnaire's disease was diagnosed last week in two patients at the Franklin Medical Center, the hospital in Columbus that treats inmates in the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation & Correction system.

JoEllen Smith, spokeswoman for the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation & Correction, announced the discovery in a statement Tuesday that said the two patients also were patients when three prior cases of patients with Legionella bacteria were found this past summer.

The department said that the five inmates had been diagnosed with Legionella, which is the bacteria that can cause Legionnaire's disease, a flu-like respiratory disease that can be fatal. The department's statement did not use the words "Legionnaire's disease."

Legionella bacteria can be found naturally in water, but can become a health concern when it spreads into building water systems, showers and faucets, hot tubs, and elsewhere. People with weakened immune systems can become vulnerable to the bacteria and develop Legionnaire's disease, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

"DRC has been very aggressive in the response and has worked collaboratively with Columbus Public Health and our national expert to remediate any issues at the facility," Smith said in the statement. Columbus Public Health could not be reached for comment Tuesday evening.

Smith listed several steps that were taken at Franklin Medical Center, including hyperchlorinating the water and installing submicron filters. Employees also are regularly flushing the showers in one zone of the hospital. The CDC said people can get Legionnaire's disease when they breathe in small droplets of water in the air that contain the bacteria.

[jwoods@dispatch.com](mailto:jwoods@dispatch.com)

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