

# Hot tubs eyed as another case of Legionnaires' reported

[Kyle Arnold](#)



Big buildings, hot tubs and warm weather might have led to the conditions that resulted in several local cases of Legionnaires' disease, medical and building experts said.

A day after news broke of four cases of Legionnaires' disease tied to two LA Fitness gyms in Orlando, [Lake County](#) health officials confirmed a seniors community in Clermont is also being investigated.

Health investigators are also focusing on hot tubs, which may help spread the deadly bacteria, at the Summit Greens community in Clermont.

It will take about two weeks in all the cases to get definitive results.

Legionnaires' disease is caused by Legionella bacteria, which is spread through water vapor. It can cause a severe form of pneumonia in susceptible populations.

Florida Department of Health officials in Orange and Lake Counties have not confirmed that the LA Fitness gyms or Summit Greens community were the definite source of the bacteria. Four LA Fitness customers contracted Legionnaires', and two cases are tied to Summit Greens.

Two of the LA Fitness cases are tied to a facility in MetroWest, and two others to a facility near the Hunter's Creek neighborhood.

"It has not been conclusively shown at this point that the exposure to the disease took place at any of our facilities; however, [The Florida Department of Health for Orange County] has recommended we conduct testing and take certain measures to remediate the facilities," LA Fitness spokeswoman Jill Greuling said in an email. A cleanup company has begun work, she said.

Other LA Fitness locations in Orange County were the source of confirmed cases of Legionnaires' disease in Orange County in 2010 and 2008.

Buildings with large water systems can be susceptible to Legionella growth and hot tubs can help spread bacteria, said Bill Pearson, senior vice president of Special Pathogens Laboratory in Pittsburgh.

"When the bacteria is able to find favorable conditions to multiply, it becomes a health hazard," he said.

While there have been several cases tied to health clubs in Orange County in the last decade, it is not a common source, said Laura Cooley, a medical epidemiologist with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Pearson also said warm weather might also help give Legionella better

conditions to grow. He said the larger the building, the more work needs to be done to prevent Legionnaires', which is why the disease is common in places such as hospitals and casinos.

There have been 17 cases of Legionnaires' reported in Orange County in 2017 and there were 30 in 2016, said Kent Donahue, a spokesman for the Florida Department of Health in Orange County.

Legionella bacteria grows in pipes when "biofilm" is allowed to grow on the surface, said Giselle Barreto, lead epidemiologist for the Florida Department of Health in Lake County.

Hot tubs, showers and whirlpool tubs can help break up that biofilm and turn it into an airborne mist, which is how the bacteria is spread to humans, she said.

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