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Cleveland MetroHealth officials confirm three patients recently treated for Legionnaire's disease

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By Pat Galbincea, The Plain Dealer
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CLEVELAND, Ohio -- Three chronically ill patients who were residents at the Elizabeth Severance Prentiss Center for Skilled Nursing in Cleveland were recently treated at MetroHealth Medical Center for legionella, better known as Legionnaire's disease.



Plain Dealer file photo
Jennifer Hanrahan, infectious disease specialist at MetroHealth

The patients were transferred to the main hospital for treatment, and two have since been released, a spokeswoman for the hospital said. A third remains in the hospital. The center is part of the MetroHealth medical campus.

As a precaution, she said, MetroHealth has switched to bottled water, has suspended showers for residents and is having the building sterilized.

Jennifer Hanrahan, an infectious-disease specialist at MetroHealth, said legionella is common and most people are exposed to it daily. There is no need to fear a major outbreak, she said.

Hanrahan said legionella is a slime that can build up in pipes or plumbing systems. It is dispersed or aerosolized primarily in a spray, fine mist or shower, although it can show up in drinking water.

Legionella is mostly treated with common antibiotics, she said.

The condition can be a problem for people with chronic lung conditions, people who have undergone transplants, people who are undergoing chemotherapy or those with diabetes, she said.

"In the case of the three patients here, they were all chronically ill," she said.

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