

Legionnaires' disease linked to Chicago hotel

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Three cases of Legionnaires' disease have been linked to a downtown Chicago hotel, and public health officials and the hotel are reaching out to more than 8,000 people who stayed there to warn them of possible exposure.

Guests who stayed at the Marriott Chicago Hotel at 151 W. Adams St. between July 16 and Aug. 15 could have been exposed to the Legionella bacteria, which can cause a form of pneumonia characterized by headache, high fever, chills, cough, chest pain and shortness of breath, officials said

The Legionella bacteria is found in water. Marriott has drained its pool, hot tub and fountain as a precaution, and the health department said it believes there “is no ongoing health risk at the hotel.”

Most people exposed to the bacteria do not become ill, but elderly people, smokers and people with chronic lung disease or weakened immune systems are more vulnerable. Legionnaires' disease can cause death in 5 to 30 percent of patients who become ill, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Symptoms generally appear between two and 14 days after exposure, according to a statement by the hotel and the Chicago Department of Public Health. It is not contagious.

About 8,500 people stayed at the Loop hotel between July 16 and Aug. 15. Hotel and city officials are trying to notify every guest and staff member. If more cases come to light, the timeframe for exposure could be extended.



(Joe Raedle, Getty Images)

Hotel guests who are experiencing symptoms or who have been diagnosed with pneumonia should contact their doctors, health officials said. Those who might have been exposed can also call a public health hotline at 312-746-4835 on weekdays from 8:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m.

Reached by phone Tuesday afternoon, hotel employees did not comment beyond the prepared statement. A message left with the public health department wasn't immediately returned.

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