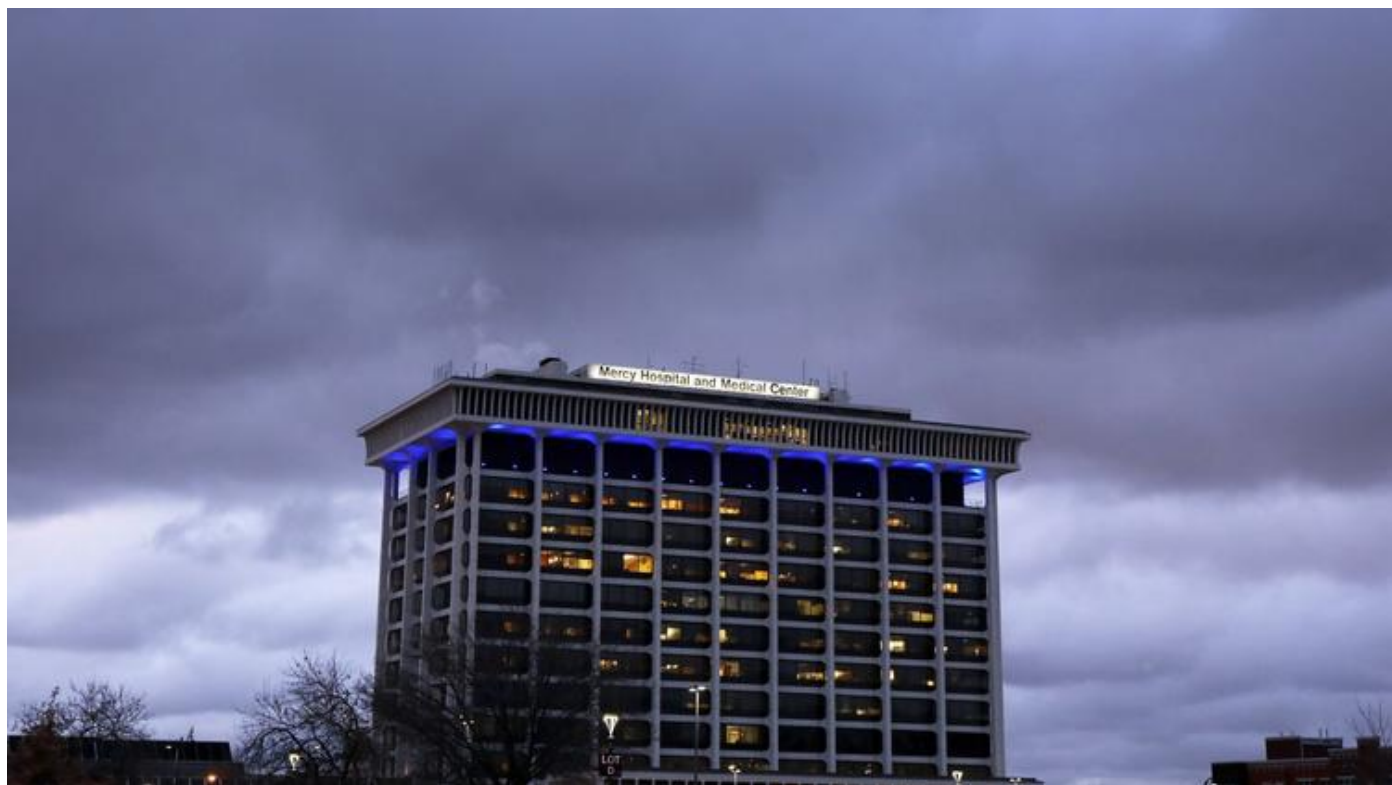


# State health officials: 2 Mercy Hospital patients contract Legionnaires' disease



The exterior of Mercy Hospital in Chicago is seen on Wednesday, Nov. 21, 2018. (Terrence Antonio James/Chicago Tribune)

By **Chicago Tribune staff**  
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**T**wo patients at Mercy Hospital and Medical Center have come down with Legionnaires' disease after the hospital's water tested positive for the disease, state health officials announced Friday.

The patients were exposed to it possibly through the water system at the hospital, 2525 S. Michigan Ave. in the Bronzeville neighborhood, according to a statement from the Illinois Department of Public Health.

Though its exact source was under investigation, the hospital's water system tested positive for the disease.

The general public is not at risk and the investigation of the source of the outbreak is limited to the facility.

Legionnaires' disease is a serious lung infection (pneumonia) that people can get by breathing in small droplets of water containing Legionella bacteria. Legionnaires' disease is not passed from person to person, the statement said.

Mercy Hospital was working with a water management team, including the state and city health departments, to strengthen its water management practices and the facility has already put protective measures in place such as flushing the water system, altering or replacing water fixtures, and placing filters on sinks, according to the statement.

Legionella bacteria occur naturally in the environment. Water containing Legionella bacteria can be aerosolized through cooling towers, showers, hot tubs and decorative fountains, and can cause illness when inhaled.

Outbreaks are most commonly associated with buildings or structures that have complex water systems like hotels, hospitals, long-term care facilities and cruise ships, the statement said.

The bacterium can become a health concern when it grows and spreads in human-made water systems, like hot tubs, cooling towers, hot water tanks, large plumbing systems and decorative fountains.

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