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## Two cases of Legionnaire's disease traced to gym hot tub

By Molly Rosbach

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YAKIMA, Wash. -- The Yakima Athletic Club is disinfecting every inch of its men's hot tub after two gym members contracted Legionnaire's disease.

Legionnaire's is a type of pneumonia and causes symptoms such as a cough, shortness of breath, fever, muscle aches and headaches, a release from the Yakima Health District said. It's treated with antibiotics.

The first case was reported on Nov. 28, then the Health District tested the hot tub in the men's locker room on Dec. 4. After the samples had been sent to the lab, a second case of Legionnaire's was confirmed in another man from the Athletic Club.

The tests came back positive on Dec. 13, and the Athletic Club voluntarily closed the hot tub and has kept it closed while staff work to complete the necessary cleaning protocols.

"In addition, we shut all of our wet areas down, just on our own accord because we're very concerned," general manager Carrie Sattler said Monday. "We hyper-chlorinated all of our wet areas over the weekend," though the hot tub was the only area that had tested positive for legionella.

Because the maximum incubation period for Legionnaire's is 14 days after exposure, it's unlikely any further cases will be reported after Dec. 27, Health District director of disease control Melissa Sixberry said.

Sattler said Health District officials are coming back on Tuesday, to test the tub again. If results show it's still contaminated, Athletic Club staff will keep cleaning until they can rout out the source of the bacteria, whether it's in the pipes or filtration system or somewhere else along the line.

"We're just going to keep going until we find it," Sattler said.

In the meantime, the gym has posted notices explaining why the tub is closed and giving members information on Legionnaire's.

The disease is spread via inhalation of aerosolized droplets contaminated with legionella bacteria, so common problem areas are showerheads, faucets and any other fixture where water comes out in mist or vapor form.

Spas are at high risk because of the higher temperature, which requires a stronger chlorine level to prevent them becoming breeding ground for bacteria; and because the normal cleaning process may not completely immerse every part of the pump system, leaving some bacteria behind, said environmental health director Holly Myers with the Health District.

Fortunately, "Legionella is not tolerant of strong doses of bleach," Myers said. "So if you disinfect and maintain proper levels of bleach, and make sure that bleach gets throughout the system, then (cleanliness) is maintained and kept under control."

Legionnaire's doesn't generally spread person-to-person. Most people who are exposed to legionella bacteria never get sick. But older adults, people with underlying conditions like COPD or diabetes, and people who are on immunosuppressants or are otherwise immunocompromised are at greatest risk of

Legionnaire's, Sixberry said.

And for those who do contract the disease, Legionnaire's is serious: The fatality rate is 10 percent, she said.

Citing patient privacy regulations, the Health District did not disclose whether either man has been hospitalized for Legionnaire's.

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