

Eight cases of Legionnaire's disease confirmed in Orillia: Health Unit

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NEWS RELEASE

SIMCOE MUSKOKA DISTRICT HEALTH UNIT

The Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit (SMDHU) is currently investigating a cluster of Legionnaires' disease cases in the Orillia area. Eight cases of Legionnaires' disease have been confirmed in individuals who reside in or have visited the City of Orillia in recent weeks.

Legionnaires' disease is a lung disease caused by Legionella bacteria, which is commonly found in natural freshwater environments. However, it can become a health concern in water systems, such as cooling towers, plumbing systems in large buildings and certain medical devices when conditions allow the bacteria to multiply.

People can develop Legionnaires' disease when they inhale aerosolized water droplets containing the bacteria. People cannot get Legionnaires' disease by drinking water and it cannot be passed from person to person. Most people exposed to the bacteria do not become ill.

Legionnaires' disease is a type of pneumonia (lung infection) caused by the bacteria. People over the age of 50, smokers, or those with certain medical conditions, including weakened immune systems, chronic lung disease or other chronic health conditions, are at increased risk for Legionnaires' disease.

"We are investigating and ensuring the proper functioning of such water systems that may be the source of the illnesses, and we have notified health care providers in the community to watch and test for potential cases," said Dr. Charles Gardner, medical officer of health for SMDHU.

"The risk to residents and visitors is very low. At this time, we do not recommend Orillia residents to change their work, play and travel plans."

Legionnaires' disease can cause a variety of symptoms. Some of the most common are fever, chills, cough and difficulty breathing. Other symptoms can also develop, such as headaches, muscle pain and digestive problems (e.g. loss of appetite, nausea, vomiting or diarrhea).

The health unit recommends anyone with concerns that they may be ill to call Telehealth Ontario at 1-866-797-0000 or seek immediate medical attention if they have difficulty breathing.

More information on Legionnaire's disease found at www.smdhu.org or by calling Health Connection at 705-721-7520 or 1-877-721-7520, weekdays from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

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