

Four cases of Legionnaires' disease confirmed in Tazewell County since July

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TAZEWELL COUNTY, Ill. — Since July of this year, Tazewell County has seen four confirmed cases of Legionnaires' disease.

Legionnaires' disease is a very serious type of pneumonia caused by a bacteria in water droplets. The bacteria, Legionella, lives in fresh water and rarely causes illness. However, Legionella can grow if water is not properly maintained.

Man-made water sources become a health care problem when small droplets of water that contain the bacteria get into the air and people breathe them in.

In general, people do not spread Legionnaires' disease to other people.

Many of the symptoms experienced by someone with Legionnaires' disease mimic those of someone with COVID-19.

“Symptoms for Legionnaires' disease can include cough, shortness of breath, muscle aches, headaches and fever,” said Tazewell County Health Department Communications Manager Sara Sparkman.

Sparkman said a lot of the common sources of Legionnaires' disease is showers, fountains and hot tubs.

To determine if someone does have the disease, a chest X-Ray is done to see if pneumonia is present, according to Sparkman. If it is present, then a doctor may order tests on a sample of urine to see if the infection is caused by Legionella.

Most people who get sick need care in a hospital but make a full recovery. However, about 1 in 10 people who get Legionnaires' disease will die from the infection, according to the CDC.

LEGIONNAIRES' DISEASE

Legionnaires' (LEE-juh-nares) disease is a very serious type of pneumonia (lung infection) caused by bacteria called *Legionella*. If you develop pneumonia symptoms and may have been exposed to *Legionella*, see a doctor right away. Be sure to mention if you have used a hot tub, spent any nights away from home, or stayed in a hospital in the last two weeks.

Legionnaires' Disease Can Cause Pneumonia Symptoms

Signs and symptoms of Legionnaires' disease can include:

- ▶ Cough
- ▶ Shortness of breath
- ▶ Muscle aches
- ▶ Headache
- ▶ Fever

Doctors use chest x-rays or physical exams to check for pneumonia. Your doctor may also order tests on a sample of urine and sputum (phlegm) to see if your lung infection is caused by *Legionella*.

Legionnaires' Disease Is Serious, but Can Be Treated with Antibiotics

Legionnaires' disease is treated with antibiotics (drugs that kill bacteria in the body). Most people who get sick need care in a hospital but make a full recovery. However, about 1 out of 10 people who get Legionnaires' disease will die from the infection.

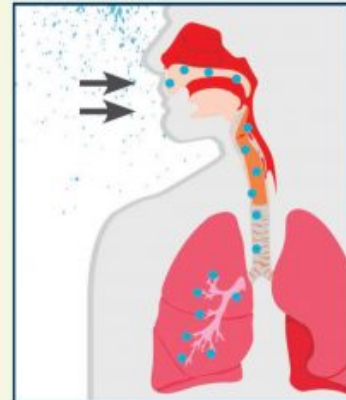
Certain People Are at Increased Risk for Legionnaires' Disease

Most healthy people do not get Legionnaires' disease after being exposed to *Legionella*. Being 50 years or older or having certain risk factors can increase your chances of getting sick. These risk factors include:

- ▶ Being a current or former smoker
- ▶ Having chronic lung disease, such as emphysema or chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD)
- ▶ Having a weakened immune system from diseases like cancer, diabetes, or kidney failure
- ▶ Taking medication that weakens your immune system

Legionella Are Usually Spread through Water Droplets in the Air

In nature, *Legionella* live in fresh water and rarely cause illness. In man-made settings, *Legionella* can grow if water is not properly maintained. These man-made water sources become a health problem when small droplets of water that contain the bacteria get into the air and people breathe them in. In rare cases, someone breathes in *Legionella* while they are drinking water and it "goes down the wrong pipe" into the lungs. In general, people do not spread Legionnaires' disease to other people.






Legionnaires' disease, a type of severe pneumonia, is caused by breathing in small droplets of water that contain *Legionella*.

Commons Sources of Infection

Outbreaks of Legionnaires' disease are often associated with large or complex water systems, like those found in hospitals, hotels, and cruise ships.

The most likely sources of infection include:

-  Water used for showering (potable water)
-  Cooling towers (parts of large air conditioning systems)
-  Decorative fountains
-  Hot tubs