



LEGIONNAIRES' DISEASE (PONTIAC FEVER) FACT SHEET

WHAT IS LEGIONNAIRES' DISEASE?

Legionnaires' disease is a respiratory disease caused by Legionella bacteria.

HOW DO YOU GET LEGIONNAIRES' DISEASE?

Found naturally in freshwater environments, like lakes and streams. It can become a health concern when it grows and spreads in human-made water systems like; showers and faucets, cooling towers (air-conditioning units for large buildings), hot tubs that aren't drained after each use, decorative fountains and water features, hot water tanks and heaters, and large plumbing systems. People can get Legionnaires' disease when they breathe in small droplets of water in the air that contain the bacteria.

SYMPTOMS

People who get sick after being exposed to Legionella can develop two different illnesses: Legionnaires' disease and Pontiac fever. Symptoms of Legionnaire's disease include cough, shortness of breath, fever, muscle aches, and headaches. Symptoms of Pontiac Fever include loss of appetite, muscle aches, headache, and mild respiratory symptoms. It typically takes 2-10 days for symptoms to appear after being exposed.

TREATMENT

Legionnaires' disease requires treatment with antibiotics. Pontiac fever goes away without specific treatment. Discuss treatment options with your doctor.

PREVENTION

- Ensure that the water systems in buildings are maintained in order to reduce the risk of growing and spreading Legionella. For domestic or institutional water systems, water should be stored at >60°C (140°F) and distributed at >50°C (122°F).
- Should your water system be implicated in an outbreak, the system may be superheated (>160°F) and all outlets flushed using hot water for at least 10 minutes
- Manufacturer recommendations of cooling towers for routine operation, cleaning and maintenance should be strictly followed
- Ensure hot tubs have the right disinfectant and pH levels
- Shower heads and tap aerators can be cleaned on a monthly basis using a chlorine-based product

DGHD EFFORTS

Reports of suspected and confirmed cases of disease are made to the Delaware General Health District (DGHD). The DGHD investigates potential sources of illness, conducts surveillance for the spread of disease, and engages in community outreach and education.