

# PUBLIC HEALTH FACT SHEET



COUNTY MICHIGAN  
HEALTH DIVISION

Department of Health & Human Services

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## Legionnaires' Disease

### What is Legionnaires' Disease?

Legionnaires' Disease (Legionellosis) is a severe respiratory infection, which is caused by a bacteria.

### Who can get the disease/condition?

People of any age may get Legionnaires' Disease. People at highest risk are middle-aged and older persons, particularly those who smoke or have chronic lung disease. Also at risk are persons with poor immune systems (such as persons with diabetes, kidney disease, and HIV/AIDS).

### What are the symptoms?

Legionnaires' Disease is characterized by loss of appetite, extreme tiredness, and headache. Within a day of infection there is rising fever associated with chills. Temperatures commonly reach 102-105 degrees F. Pneumonia, a nonproductive cough, abdominal (stomach) pain, and diarrhea are also common symptoms.

### How long after exposure do symptoms begin?

2-10 days after exposure, averaging 5-6 days.

### How is it spread?

Legionnaires' Disease occurs after persons have inhaled mist from a water source (e.g., air conditioning cooling condensers, whirlpool spas, showers) that has Legionella bacteria present. Persons may be exposed to these sources inside or outside of buildings. There is no evidence of persons becoming infected from car air conditioners or household window air conditioners.

### How long is the person contagious?

Person to person spread has not been shown, so there is no contagious period.

### Are there complications?

Legionnaires' Disease can cause respiratory failure and death.

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## **Is there a treatment for this disease?**

Antibiotics are used in treatment of Legionnaires' Disease.

## **How can the disease be prevented?**

Improved design, cleaning and maintenance of water sources such as cooling towers, evaporative condensers, and whirlpools.

**For more information on Legionnaire, call (248) 858-1406 or toll free 1 (800) 848-5533.**

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