



## 1. What is legionellosis?

Legionellosis (Lee-juh-nel-o-sis) is a lung infection caused by a bacteria (germ).

The disease has two different forms:

- ***Pontiac Fever:*** milder (gentler) form of the illness without pneumonia
- ***Legionnaires' disease:*** severe and potentially deadly form of the illness with pneumonia (inflammation of the lungs)

## 2. How do you get legionellosis?

*Legionella* germs are found in water/plumbing systems and grow to high numbers in still water. Legionellosis may occur after a person breathes in mists or vapors from a germ polluted water source (e.g. air conditioning cooling towers, whirlpool spas, showers, humidifiers, decorative fountains). Legionellosis is not passed from person to person.

People who are most at risk of getting sick from legionellosis include the elderly, smokers, patients with chronic lung disease (e.g. emphysema) and those with weak immune systems (e.g. patients with HIV, cancer, diabetes and kidney failure).

## 3. How do you know if you have legionellosis?

The most common symptoms of *pontiac fever* include:

- Fever
- Headache
- Muscle aches

The most common symptoms of *legionnaires' disease* include:

- Fever
- Diarrhea
- Muscle aches
- Tiredness
- Chills
- Headache
- Loss of appetite
- Cough

*Pontiac fever* symptoms appear within a few hours to three days after contact with the germ and last two to five days. There is no pneumonia.

*Legionnaires' disease* symptoms appear within two to ten days, and people with this form are usually much sicker. Temperatures can reach 102°F-105°F and chest x-rays often show signs of pneumonia.

## 4. How is legionellosis treated?

Legionellosis is best treated through early detection and intervention.

- *Pontiac fever* requires no specific treatment.
- *Legionnaires' disease* is treated with antibiotics.

## 5. How can legionellosis be prevented?

- Make sure cooling towers and plumbing systems are in good condition.
- Clean and disinfect water systems thoroughly.
- Avoiding smoking can greatly reduce the risk of legionellosis infection.
- If you have reason to believe you were exposed to the germ, talk to your doctor or local health department. Early identification and control of the source of infection can help prevent others from getting legionellosis.

### Sources

1. *Legionellosis*. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.  
[http://www.cdc.gov/legionella/patient\\_facts.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/legionella/patient_facts.htm)
2. *Legionellosis*. Department of Health Promotion and Education.  
<http://www.dhpe.org/infect/Legion.html>
3. *Legionellosis*. L.A. County Department of Public Health.  
<http://www.publichealth.lacounty.gov/acd/>
4. *Legionellosis*. The Mayo Clinic.  
<http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/legionnaires-disease/DS00853>

For additional resources, please visit the L.A. County Department of Public Health website <http://publichealth.lacounty.gov>.