

ABOUT LEGIONNAIRES' DISEASE

What is Legionnaires' disease?

- Legionnaires' disease (or Legionellosis) is a common type of pneumonia caused by a bacterium called *Legionella*.
- Legionnaires' disease is NOT contagious. It cannot be spread from person to person, and it is treatable with antibiotics. As with any infection, early diagnosis is desirable. The vast majority recover from the infection.

If it's not contagious, then how do you get Legionnaires' disease?

- People can get sick from inhaling contaminated mists from cooling towers, showers, faucets, and whirlpool spas. The disease occurs most commonly in the summer and fall.
- Anyone concerned about the disease should seek care from a physician or go to the nearest emergency room.

What are the symptoms?

- Symptoms include fever, cough, headache, lack of energy, tiredness and difficulty breathing.
- If infection occurs, disease symptoms usually appear within 2 to 10 days.

Are some people at a higher risk of developing Legionnaires' disease?

Yes, some people have lower resistance to disease and are more likely to develop Legionnaires' disease. Some of the factors that can increase the risk of getting the disease include:

- Organ transplants (kidney, heart, etc.)
- Age (older persons are more likely to get disease)
- Heavy smoking
- Weakened immune system (cancer patients, HIV-infected individuals)
- Underlying medical problem (respiratory disease, diabetes, cancer, renal dialysis, etc.)
- Certain drug therapies (corticosteroids)
- Heavy consumption of alcoholic beverages

What has Lincoln done since *Legionella* was discovered?

- Once discovered, cleaning and disinfecting took place immediately. Remediating a cooling tower involves flushing, removal of biofilm, cleaning, and the use of disinfectants.
- Original testing by the DOH indicated a low level of *Legionella* in our cooling tower (aka cooling system).
- After remediation, and in consultation with the DOH, a long term plan will be implemented.

What is Lincoln doing to protect its patients and staff?

- Periodic monitoring, cleaning and disinfecting, and testing of the cooling tower will occur on an ongoing basis.
- Any employee experiencing cough and fever, with or without associated vomiting and diarrhea, should seek immediate medical attention.

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ABOUT LEGIONNAIRES' DISEASE (continued)

Has the City identified the source of Legionnaires' disease?

- The City has identified several cooling towers that have tested positive for Legionella, and notified the owners to take action immediately. All cooling towers were decontaminated immediately.
- The Health Department continues to aggressively test other possible sources, and is testing additional sites surrounding the affected area.
- The Health Department is also investigating the laboratory reports to determine whether cases are due to a common exposure.

Should people who work and live in the South Bronx stop drinking the water and taking showers?

- No, not at all. The New York City water supply does not pose a risk, and this investigation does not suggest that the source is a building's plumbing system. *Legionella* is spread through inhaling mist.

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