



Notice to Residents in and Around Central Harlem About Legionnaires' Disease

The New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (NYC Health Department) is investigating a cluster of Legionnaires' disease in Central Harlem (ZIP codes 10030, 10037 and 10039). As of August 20, 2021, 12 people have been diagnosed with Legionnaires' disease since August 9. The NYC Health Department is sampling and testing the water from all cooling tower systems in the area of the cluster. **The risk to most people is low, but if you have flu-like symptoms — such as cough, fever, chills, muscle aches or shortness of breath — see a health care provider right away.**

The likely source of the bacteria causing this pneumonia in the community is a cooling tower (or towers) in the affected area. Cooling towers are water systems usually found on the top of buildings and are responsible for regulating the temperature of cooling systems such as central air conditioning or refrigeration. The cooling towers spray mist from the top that can contain the bacteria. At this time, all the cooling towers in the impacted area have been identified and sampled by the Health Department. If needed, Commissioner's Orders will be issued to disinfect and clean any affected cooling towers.

This is not an issue with any building's plumbing system. It is safe for you to drink water, bathe, shower, cook and use your air conditioner.

Frequently Asked Questions About Legionnaires' Disease

- **What is Legionnaires' disease?** Legionnaires' disease is a pneumonia caused by *Legionella* bacteria (which are found naturally in the environment and grow in warm water) inhaled into the lungs.
- **Is the disease contagious?** No. Legionnaires' disease is not spread from person to person. People only get sick by breathing in water vapor containing the bacteria. People who are sick cannot make others sick.
- **Who is at risk?** Groups at higher risk include people who are ages 50 and older — especially cigarette smokers — people with chronic lung disease or weakened immune systems and people who take medicines that weaken their immune systems (immunosuppressive drugs).
- **What are the symptoms of Legionnaires' disease?** Symptoms are like the flu and can include fever, chills, muscle aches, cough and shortness of breath. Some people may also have headaches, fatigue, loss of appetite, confusion or diarrhea.
- **What should I do if I think I have Legionnaires' disease?** If you have flu-like symptoms, seek medical attention right away, especially if you have a health condition that affects your breathing, such as emphysema, or if you are a smoker.
- **What is the treatment for Legionnaires' disease?** The disease is treated with antibiotics. Most people get better with early treatment, although they may need to be hospitalized. Some people may get very sick or even die from complications of the disease — it is important to get medical help right away if you develop symptoms.

For more information or if you have questions, call **311**, visit nyc.gov/health/legionnaires or email communityaffairs@health.nyc.gov.