

Legionella Facts

Legionella Bacteria can cause Legionnaires Disease or Pontiac Fever.

The bacterium was named after an outbreak in 1976, at the Philadelphia Convention for the American Legion.

Legionnaire's disease is a severe Pneumonia caused by the Legionella bacterium.

Range of symptoms includes flu like illness, combined with muscle aches, tiredness, and headache, loss of appetite, dry cough and fever.

There are specific antibiotics that are effective in treating the disease.

Long term health problems can occur after catching the disease; these include lung damage and brain damage.

Legionnaire's disease is an uncommon but serious illness, and deaths do occur in approximately 10 – 15% of cases. People most at risk of dying may have an underlying health problem, and therefore have a weakened immune system.

It is thought that the infection generally takes place when a person inhales water droplets containing the Legionella bacteria.

The risk of the bacteria being created has led to strict controls being placed on the maintenance of public water temperatures, cold water must be kept either below 20°C or Hot water heated to 60°C to lower the outbreak risk.

Is Legionnaires' disease easy to diagnose? No. The pneumonia caused by LD is not easy to distinguish from other forms of pneumonia. A number of diagnostic tests allow a physician to identify the disease. These tests can be performed on a sample of sputum, lung tissue collected by biopsy, blood, or urine.

In 2002 an outbreak in Barrow-in-Furness led to 172 people being infected, seven of these died.

In 1985 175 patients were admitted to hospitals in Stafford, a total of 28 people died.

Keeping *Legionella* bacteria out of water is the key to preventing infection.