

Legionnaires' Disease: Frequently Asked Questions

The NYC Health Department is investigating a cluster of Legionnaires' disease in Carnegie Hill and Yorkville on the Upper East Side of Manhattan (ZIP codes 10028, 10128, and 10075).

What is Legionnaires' disease?

Legionnaires' disease is a type of pneumonia caused by *Legionella* bacteria that grow in warm water. It causes flu-like symptoms, including fever, chills, muscle aches, cough, and shortness of breath. Legionnaires' disease is treatable with antibiotics, but complications from the disease can be serious or fatal if left untreated.

Who is at risk?

You are at increased risk if you are 50 or older, smoke or vape, have a medical condition or take medicine that weakens your immune system, or have diabetes or a chronic heart, lung, kidney, or liver disease. Legionnaires' disease in children and babies is extremely rare.

Get medical attention right away if you have symptoms and live or work in or have visited the affected ZIP codes since late June. For help finding a healthcare provider, regardless of immigration or insurance status, call **311** or 844-NYC-4NYC (844-692-4692).

Can I get tested for Legionnaires' disease?

There is no screening test for Legionnaires' disease. If you have symptoms of Legionnaires' disease, a healthcare provider can diagnose based on a series of tests.

What is a Legionnaires' disease community cluster?

Legionella bacteria are common and occur naturally in the environment. When multiple cases of Legionnaires' disease occur in the same area in a short period of time, the Health Department investigates and eliminates the source of the bacteria. In the case of the cluster on the Upper East Side, the Health Department launched an investigation when two cases were confirmed.

Is Legionnaires' disease preventable?

There is no vaccine or medicine you can take to prevent Legionnaires' disease, but it can be treated with antibiotics. That's why it's important to see your healthcare provider right away if you

have been in the affected area and are experiencing flu-like symptoms.

The best way to prevent Legionnaires' disease community clusters is for building owners to properly maintain cooling towers where *Legionella* may grow.

What is the source of this Legionnaires' cluster?

The likely source of the *Legionella* bacteria causing this cluster is one or more cooling towers in the affected area. Cooling towers are water systems usually found on top of buildings. They are most often used for cooling a building or refrigeration. Cooling towers spray water vapor (mist) that may contain *Legionella*. People in the community may inhale the mist and become sick.

The Health Department is testing water samples from cooling towers in the area. Cooling towers that test positive for *Legionella* will be cleaned and disinfected immediately.

Am I more at risk inside my building?

The risk of contracting Legionnaires' disease from the air inside a building is not different from anywhere else in the neighborhood.

Is it safe to use the water in my apartment?

Yes, it is safe for you to drink water, bathe, shower, cook, and use your air conditioner. Continuing to use your air conditioner is especially important when the city is experiencing extreme heat and temperatures reach dangerously high levels.

A community cluster of Legionnaires' disease is not related to a building's plumbing system. Does Legionnaires' disease spread from person to person?

No, Legionnaires' disease is not contagious. It is spread through mist in the air that contains *Legionella* bacteria. If you are sick, you cannot make someone else sick.

Do I need to wear a mask?

We do not recommend wearing a mask to prevent Legionnaires' disease. The best thing to do is to see a healthcare provider right away if you are experiencing symptoms.

Visit nyc.gov/legionnaires for more information, including a list of cooling towers in the area that tested positive for traces of *Legionella* bacteria.