

LEGIONNAIRES' DISEASE ALERT

Information for NSW Emergency Department Clinicians

1. Five cases of confirmed infection with *Legionella pneumophila* have been notified in the past six weeks with links to Sydney's Central Business District
2. The cases have spent time in the CBD area during their exposure period
3. Have a high index of suspicion for cases presenting with respiratory symptoms and/or features suggestive of pneumonia and notify your public health unit

Summary

There is a possible cluster of *Legionella pneumophila* with five confirmed cases notified, all caused by serogroup 1, with onsets between 16 October and 23 November. The cases have spent time in Sydney's Central Business District during their exposure period. While no source has been identified, NSW Health is working with the City of Sydney to ensure cooling towers in the affected area are properly maintained.

Modes of transmission

- *Legionella pneumophila* bacteria can contaminate air conditioning cooling towers, whirlpool spas, shower heads and other bodies of water. People walking outside or driving past may be exposed if they inhale aerosolised contaminated water.
- Legionnaires' disease is not spread from person to person.
- Typical incubation period is 2 to 10 days, but more commonly 5 to 6 days.

Symptoms of Legionnaires' disease

Legionnaires' disease usually causes fever, chills, a cough and shortness of breath. Early symptoms are non-specific including muscle aches, headache, tiredness, loss of appetite and diarrhoea. Cases may not present with pneumonia until a week after onset. Most people recover but the disease is occasionally fatal, particularly when it occurs with other co-morbidities or in the context of immune suppression.

Diagnosis

- It is difficult to distinguish Legionnaires' disease from other types of pneumonia by symptoms alone. Chest X-rays help diagnose pneumonia but the diagnosis of Legionnaires' disease requires special tests.
- Samples and testing:
 - urine for *Legionella* urinary antigen test - available in local laboratories
 - sputum and or bronchial washings for culture - please refer these specimens to NSW Health Pathology-ICPMR for legionella culture and serogrouping.
- For further information about testing, consult with your local laboratory, infectious disease physicians and local public health unit.

Treatment

Consult the [Therapeutic Guidelines: Antibiotics](http://www.tg.org.au/) (http://www.tg.org.au/) for treatment options.

Public Health Response

- Please urgently notify your public health unit of any suspected case.

Further Information:

- Contact your local public health unit on **1300 066 055**
- NSW Legionnaires' Disease website:
<http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/legionnaires/Pages/default.aspx>

Yours sincerely



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