

Clinician Alert – Legionella Cluster



SAFETY NOTICE 007/25

Issue date:	9 April 2025
Content reviewed by:	Health Protection NSW
Distributed to:	Chief Executives; Directors of Clinical Governance; Director, Regulation and Compliance Unit
KEY MESSAGE:	<p>A cluster of 5 patients with <i>Legionella pneumophila</i> infection has been identified. All spent time in the Sydney CBD during their incubation period.</p> <p>Clinicians should be alert for patients with symptoms consistent with <i>Legionella pneumophila</i> infection, request specific testing on suspected cases, and report suspected cases to the local public health unit.</p>
ACTION REQUIRED BY:	Clinicians
REQUIRED ACTION:	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Distribute this Safety Notice to all relevant clinicians and clinical departments for awareness.2. Include this Safety Information in relevant handovers and safety huddles3. Notify your local public health unit of any suspected case.
We recommend you also inform:	Directors, Managers and Staff of: Emergency departments, Intensive care, Infectious Diseases, Respiratory Physicians, General medicine, Geriatrics, Nursing
Website:	https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/sabs/Pages/default.aspx http://internal.health.nsw.gov.au/quality/sabs/index.html
Review date:	July 2025

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Situation

There is a cluster of 5 patients with *Legionella pneumophila* serogroup 1 infection. The patients had symptom onsets between 30 March to 4 April.

The 5 patients visited Sydney CBD during their incubation period.

No single source for the cases has been identified, and it is possible that they are unrelated.

An investigation of potential sources in the area is underway.

Background

Legionella pneumophila bacteria can contaminate air conditioning cooling towers (located on top of buildings), whirlpool spas, shower heads and other bodies of water. People may be exposed if they inhale aerosolized contaminated water. Contaminated cooling towers can cause large outbreaks of Legionnaires disease.

The typical incubation period is 2 to 10 days, but more commonly 5 to 6 days.

Symptoms usually include fever, chills, cough, and dyspnoea. Cases may also have muscle aches, headache, fatigue, loss of appetite and diarrhoea.

Assessment

It can be difficult to distinguish *Legionella pneumophila* infection from other types of pneumonia by symptoms alone.

Cases may be critically unwell with pneumonia. Most people recover but the disease is occasionally fatal, particularly when it occurs with co-morbidities or immune suppression.

Recommendations

Consider *Legionella pneumophila* in patients with consistent symptoms, especially those who have travelled to the Sydney CBD in the 10 days prior to symptom onset.

In patients presenting with clinically consistent disease consider the following investigations:

- urine for *Legionella* urinary antigen testing
- sputum (including induced sputum or bronchial washings) for *Legionella* culture and PCR

Note: Sputum culture should always be collected if possible, to enable matching of any isolates with environmental samples.

Please notify your local public health unit of any suspected case.

Further information

<https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/legionnaires/Pages/default.aspx>