



# Sarpy/Cass Department of Health & Wellness

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## FACT SHEET

### Legionellosis

Legionellosis (Legionnaire's Disease) is caused by a bacteria called *Legionella*. This disease is often looked for when a person has pneumonia. This illness is usually found in the summer and early fall. A milder infection caused by the *Legionella* bacteria is known as Pontiac's Fever.

**Symptoms:** Symptoms are often like other forms of pneumonia. Symptoms can include high fever, chills, and a cough. People may also have muscle aches and headaches.

**Spread:** People get Legionnaire's Disease when they breathe in the mist or vapor droplets of water in the air which have been contaminated with the bacteria. Legionnaire's Disease cannot be spread from person to person.

**Incubation:** Symptoms usually begin 2 to 14 days after exposure to the bacteria.

**Contagious Period:** An infected person is not contagious to others.

**Precautions:** People with weakened immune systems from other illnesses such as cancer, diabetes, or kidney failure are at greater risk for this disease.

**Reportable:** Within seven days by the Provider or Laboratory to the state or local health department.

**Diagnosis and Treatment:** The physician will order a chest x-ray. Diagnosis may also be confirmed with a lung biopsy, a blood culture, and/or urine antigen test. Most people are treated with an antibiotic that will kill the bacteria. Some persons with Pontiac's Fever recover on their own without treatment.

**Prevention:** The best way to prevent the spread *Legionella* is to test:

- hot tubs for bacteria
- make sure companies with large water tanks take precautions with water storage
- cooling towers in big companies should be regularly serviced
- parts of air conditioning systems in large companies should be regularly serviced
- water parks with misters should be regularly serviced

Please inform medical providers or public health officials if you have traveled in the last two weeks or have been on a cruise.