



Legionellosis

What is legionellosis?

Legionellosis is a lung infection caused by the germ *Legionella*. The disease has two forms: Pontiac fever and Legionnaires' disease.

What are the symptoms and what is the treatment?

- Pontiac fever is the less severe form of the infection. The symptoms include fever, headaches and muscle aches, but no pneumonia. These symptoms usually go away without any treatment.
- Legionnaires' disease is a bacterial pneumonia. The symptoms include: a high fever, chills, cough that may be dry or produce sputum, muscle aches and headaches. The symptoms usually begin two to 14 days after a person is infected with the germ. Most cases of Legionnaires' disease are successfully treated with antibiotics.

Where do these germs come from?

The *Legionella* germs are found naturally in the environment, usually in water. These germs grow best in warm water, especially in stagnant or standing water; such as a hot water tanks, cooling towers, large plumbing systems and decorative fountains.

How do people get legionellosis?

People get legionellosis when they breathe in small droplets of water that have been contaminated with the germ.

Is it spread from person to person or from animals to people?

No.

Who is at the highest risk for getting legionellosis?

People at the highest risk for developing symptoms of legionellosis are the elderly, smokers or people with weak immune systems, kidney failure, lung disorders or cancers.

What should I do if I think I have been exposed to the *Legionella* germ?

Most people infected with the germ do not become sick. If you have reason to believe you were exposed and do experience symptoms, contact your health care provider.

For more information, call the Guilford County Department of Health and Human Services, Public Health Division at 336-641-7777, visit our website at www.myguilford.com or the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at www.cdc.gov