



WATERBURY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

Let's learn about Legionnaires' Disease

What is Legionellosis?

- Legionellosis is a bacterial infection caused by *Legionella* bacteria.
- Legionella bacteria is naturally found in lakes, streams and soil, but it can also contaminate drinking water and air systems in large buildings.
- Common infections caused by *Legionella* bacteria include **Legionnaires' Disease** and **Pontiac fever**.
- Pontiac fever is a less serious illness with flu-like symptoms.
- Legionnaires' disease is a severe type of pneumonia (lung infection) you get from breathing in Legionella bacteria. It can affect your lungs, brain and gut (gastrointestinal tract).
- Legionnaires' disease can be life-threatening.

Symptoms of Legionnaires' Disease



Fever (often over 104° F)



Dry cough



Shortness of breath



Nausea



Muscle aches



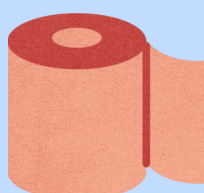
Headache



Confusion



Coughing up blood



Diarrhea



Stomach pain

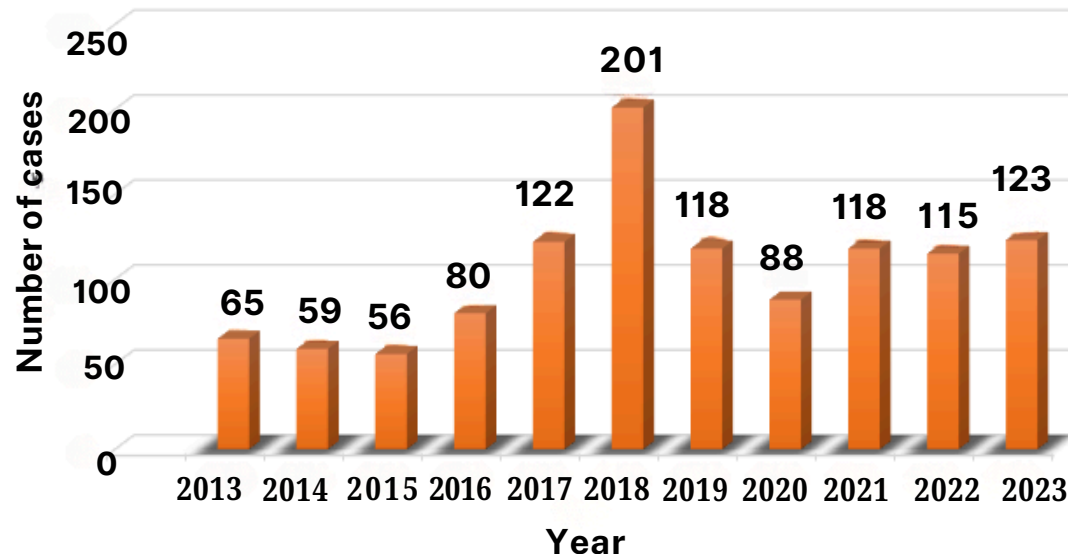
How common is Legionnaires' Disease?

- About 18,000 people are hospitalized with Legionnaires' disease each year in the U.S.
- It's more common between June and October.
- In the recent outbreak in Central Harlem that began on July 25, 2025, in New York City (NYC) there were:
 - 114 confirmed cases
 - 90 total hospitalizations
 - 7 deaths (that were investigated NYC Health Department)

Past outbreaks in Connecticut

- The Connecticut Department of Public Health (CT DPH) began routine legionellosis surveillance in 1997.
- Since then, annually reported cases have ranged from 15-201.

Total confirmed cases of Legionellosis in Connecticut from 2013 to 2023



Data source-CT DPH, Infectious disease statistics report

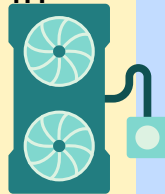
How do you get Legionnaires' Disease?

You can get Legionnaires' disease by breathing in small water droplets contaminated with Legionella bacteria or from swallowing contaminated water in your lungs.



The bacteria can become a health concern when they grow and spread in human-made building water systems like:

- Hot tubs
- Shower heads
- Faucets
- Humidifiers
- Decorative water features
- Heating and cooling systems (usually in large buildings)
- Intubation during surgery needing respiratory equipments



How is Legionnaires' Disease diagnosed?

- Urine or sputum tests
- Blood tests
- Imaging (chest X-ray or CT scan)
- Bronchoscopy: Your provider may use a thin, lighted tube to look at the inside of your lungs.
- Thoracentesis: You may need to have fluid drained from the outside of your lungs (thoracentesis)



Prevention from Legionnaires' Disease

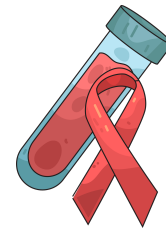
- Building managers can reduce the risk of Legionnaires' disease by maintaining and properly disinfecting water and ventilation systems.
- Reduce your risk at home by making sure shower heads, faucets, hot tubs and humidifiers are properly cleaned.
- Don't use plain water in place of windshield wiper fluid in your car. Use genuine windshield cleaner fluid.



Who is more likely to get Legionnaires' Disease?



Elderly



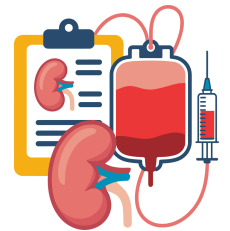
People who have weak immune systems or have HIV, cancers, diabetes or kidney and liver diseases



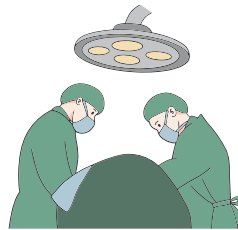
People who smoke



People in long term care facilities



People with recent organ transplant



People who have surgery requiring anaesthesia



People who have long term respiratory illness or chronic obstructive pulmonary diseases (COPD)



People who stayed in the hospital recently

How is Legionnaires' Disease Treated?

- Legionnaires' disease is treated with antibiotics.
- Antibiotics may be given through your veins (IV) or in a pill that you swallow.
- Your provider may give you treatments to help you get enough oxygen, in case of breathing difficulty.
- Treatment may require staying in the hospital.



*** To Learn more about Legionnaires' Disease, please visit the following link: CT State Department of Public Health: <https://portal.ct.gov/dph/epidemiology-and-emerging-infections/legionnaires-disease>

Sources

1. CT State Department of Public Health: <https://portal.ct.gov/dph/epidemiology-and-emerging-infections/legionnaires-disease>
2. CDC. Legionnaire's Disease. <https://www.cdc.gov/legionella/about/index.html>
3. CDC. Pontiac Fever. <https://www.cdc.gov/legionella/about/about-pontiac-fever.html>
4. CT-DPH. Infectious Disease Statistics Report
5. EPA. United States Environmental Protection Agency. Legionella in the indoor environment. <https://www.epa.gov/indoor-air-quality-iaq/legionella-indoor-environment>