

MEDIA RELEASE

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RE: Legionnaires' Disease in Genesee County

The Genesee County Health Department (GCHD) is investigating another case of Legionnaires' disease. To date, there have been 16 cases reported in Genesee County for 2016. GCHD and CDC are continuing to investigate the latest cases along with previously reported Legionnaires' cases.

GCHD has very strict physician guidance related to Legionnaires' disease. All pneumonia patients in Genesee County are tested for Legionnaires' disease.

Legionnaires' disease is a respiratory infection caused by *Legionella* bacteria. These bacteria can also cause a milder illness called Pontiac fever. We want everyone to be aware of the signs and symptoms of Legionnaires' disease which include fever, cough, shortness of breath, muscle aches, pneumonia, and sometimes diarrhea and abdominal pain. Pontiac fever has similar symptoms but does not progress to pneumonia. Antibiotics are highly effective against *Legionella* bacteria.

Legionella bacteria are commonly found in the environment (rivers, lakes, streams). It is a waterborne disease, usually spread by man-made water supplies that aerosolize water, such as showers, hot water tanks, cooling towers, whirlpool spas, and decorative fountains. People can get Legionnaires' disease when they breathe in a mist containing the bacteria. People may also be exposed to *Legionella* bacteria from water that "goes down the wrong pipe" (aspiration).

In general, the bacteria are not spread from one person to another. Filtering water does not remove *Legionella* bacteria. People who are at most risk of developing Legionnaires' disease are those who are older, smokers/former smokers, have a weakened immune system, and those who have other underlying or chronic health conditions. For those who are at an increased risk that live in the City of Flint, GCHD suggests the continued use of bottled water.

Proper maintenance and disinfection of building water systems, hot water tanks, cooling towers, whirlpool spas, and decorative fountains are the most effective measures to prevent outbreaks. GCHD has worked closely with the local medical centers to provide information about *Legionella* and clinical guidance about Legionnaires' disease. A Legionnaires' disease fact sheet is posted on the GCHD website at www.gchd.us. GCHD continues to conduct surveillance for Legionnaires' disease cases.

Genesee County Health Department. Your Health. Our Work.

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