

MEDIA RELEASE

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RE: Legionnaires' Disease in Genesee County

The Genesee County Health Department (GCHD) is investigating the 9th reported case of Legionnaires' disease in Genesee County for 2016. GCHD and CDC continue to investigate the latest case along with previously reported Legionnaires' cases.

Legionnaires' disease is a respiratory infection caused by Legionella bacteria and generally is not spread from one person to another. The disease commonly occurs during the warm weather season. Signs and symptoms of Legionnaires' disease 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 naturally occurring and found in the environment (rivers, lakes, streams). It is a waterborne disease and usually spread by man-made water supplies that aerosolize water. Examples of water supplies are 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). People who are at risk of developing the disease 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.

Filtering water does not remove Legionella bacteria. Proper maintenance and disinfection of building water systems are essential for combating the disease. Close maintenance of hot water tanks, cooling towers, whirlpool spas, and decorative fountains are the most effective measures to prevent Legionella outbreaks.

Genesee County Health Department continues to work closely with the local medical community to provide information about Legionella and clinical guidance about Legionnaires' disease. A Legionnaires' disease fact sheet is posted on GCHD's website at www.gchd.us. GCHD continues to conduct surveillance for Legionnaires' disease cases.

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