

This leaflet gives general advice. For further information please ask either the nursing or medical staff who are providing your care and treatment or contact the Infection Prevention and Control Team on 01386 502552.

If you would like this leaflet in a different language, larger print size, in audio, Braille or any other format please contact the

PALS team by phone on

☎ 01905 760020;

by letter * Communications,
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**Worcestershire
Health and Care**
NHS Trust



**LEGIONELLA/
LEGIONNAIRES' DISEASE**

What is it?

Your questions answered

**An Information Leaflet
for
Patients and Staff**

WHAT IS IT?

Legionnaires' Disease is caused by a bacteria (germ) called legionella, which may cause pneumonia. The majority of cases are reported as single cases but outbreaks can occur. In England there are around 200 cases reported each year.

WHY IS IT CALLED LEGIONNAIRES DISEASE?

An outbreak of this disease occurred in America in 1976 at a state convention of the American Legion and led to naming the disease after this group.

WHERE DOES IT COME FROM?

Legionella bacteria can be found in water. They have been found in ponds, hot and cold water systems, (eg showers or fountains) and in water in air conditioning cooling systems.



HOW DO I GET IT?

Legionella is spread through the air from a water source. Person to person spread does not occur. Breathing in aerosols of water droplets from a contaminated water system is the most likely route of transmission.

Cigarette smoking, lung disease or excess alcohol intake increases a person's risk of contracting the disease.

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS?

Early symptoms are a 'flu-like' illness with aching muscles, tiredness, headaches, dry cough and fever (temperature). Sometimes diarrhoea and confusion may develop. Pneumonia may then develop from these symptoms. Death may occur in 10-15% of otherwise healthy individuals.

WHO GETS LEGIONNAIRES' DISEASE?

All ages can be affected but it mainly affects people over 50 years of age and generally men more than women.

WHAT IS THE INCUBATION PERIOD?

The time from contact with the bacteria to actual illness is usually 3 to 6 days, but can range from 2 to 10 days. In rare cases some people may develop symptoms up to three weeks after they are exposed to the bacteria.

IS THERE ANY TREATMENT?

Treatment for Legionnaires' Disease is through antibiotics.

HOW IS IT DIAGNOSED?

A quick diagnosis can be made by testing a sample of urine from the patient if they have the relevant symptoms.

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I THINK I HAVE LEGIONNAIRES' DISEASE?

If you believe you have this infection you should tell your doctor so that the appropriate investigations can be started.

ARE MY FAMILY AND FRIENDS AT RISK OF LEGIONELLA?

No, person to person spread is rare. Family and friends would only be at risk if they contracted Legionella from the same water source.