



KWAZULU-NATAL PROVINCE

HEALTH
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Legionnaire's Disease



 KwaZulu-Natal Department of Health

 kznhealth

 KZN Department of Health

 @kznhealth

**GROWING
KWAZULU-NATAL
TOGETHER**

What is Legionnaires' disease?

Legionnaires' disease is an infectious disease caused by a Gram-negative bacilli called Legionella.

Mode of Transmission

Persons become infected by breathing in water droplets containing the Legionella bacteria through:

- Hot and cold water systems (e.g. showers and taps)
- Cooling towers and evaporative condensers of air conditioners
- Spa baths (Jacuzzis) , whirlpool baths and natural pools or thermal springs
- Ornamental fountains (particularly indoors) and sprinklers
- Humidified food display cabinets
- Respiratory therapy equipment

Susceptible groups

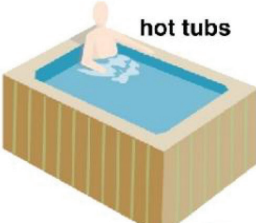
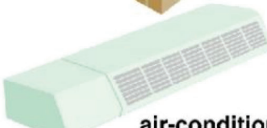


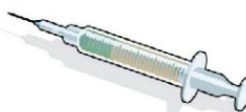

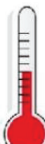
The following groups of people are at higher risk:

- Men (2-3 times more susceptible than women)
- People of increasing age, particularly over 50 years old
- Smokers
- Alcoholics
- Person with weakened immunity, especially those with chronic illnesses (such as cancer, diabetes mellitus, chronic lung or kidney diseases) and those taking corticosteroids or drugs that suppress body immunity.

The following situations may also increase the risk of infection:

- Poor maintenance leading to stagnant water in water system
- Living in areas with old water distribution or plumbing systems
- Living near cooling towers or fountains
- Using electric water heater, whirlpool, spas or hot water spring spas

Legionnaire's Disease

Infection	Symptoms	Treatment
<p>Caused by bacteria which thrives in warm water and damp places like:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">  hot tubs  air-conditioning systems  plumbing systems <p>source : WHO, UK NHS</p>	<p>Similar to a severe flu and can include fever, chills, loss of appetite, headache, lethargy</p> <p>Potentially fatal form of pneumonia</p>  <p>Legionella bacteria</p> <p><i>Can not be transmitted from person to person</i></p>	<p>Antibiotics</p>  <p>No vaccine is currently available</p>  <p>Prevention</p>  <p>Water supply systems should be cooled below 20C or heated above 60C</p> <p style="text-align: right;">AFP</p>

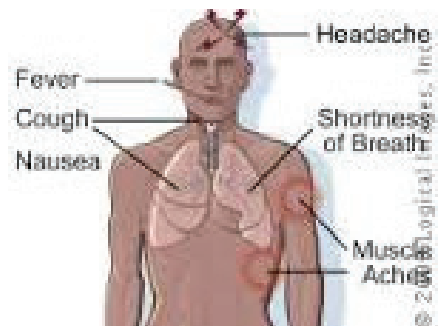
Incubation period

About 2-10 days

Clinical picture

Symptoms are non-specific and may include a flu-like illness. Can present with:

- dry cough
- fever
- shortness of breath
- tiredness
- headache
- muscle & abdominal pain
- diarrhoea
- confusion



Management

- It can be treated with antibiotics
- Seek medical attention if *Legionella* is suspected
- There are currently no vaccines to prevent Legionnaires disease.

Prevention

It is important to observe the following advice to reduce the risk of infection:

- Observe personal hygiene
- Avoid smoking and excessive drinking
- Hot water should be maintained above 60°C and delivered to taps at temperatures above 50°C.
- Cold water should be maintained below 20°C.
- Plumbing systems should be flushed regularly and low flow areas eliminated.
- Meticulous cleaning and disinfection of water systems, pools and spas.

