

# WHAT IS LEGIONNAIRE'S DISEASE

## What is Legionellosis?

Legionellosis, or legionnaire's disease, is a bacterial disease of the lungs caused by *Legionella pneumophila*. The disease can range from a mild respiratory illness to severe pneumonia and death.

## How does it spread?

People get sick with *Legionella* by breathing in mist containing the germ. Typically, *Legionella* doesn't spread through person-to-person contact. *Legionella* is found in low counts in fresh water environments and rarely causes disease, but can pose a health risk if it gets in building water systems and grows there.

## Who is at risk for getting sick with *Legionella*?

Most people don't get sick if exposed to *Legionella*, but some factors can increase the risk for it, such as:

- Being a current or former smoker
- Being 50 years or older
- Having chronic lung disease
- Having cancer
- Having a weakened immune system
- Having kidney or liver failure
- Having diabetes

## Preventing Legionnaire's Disease

Reducing *Legionella*'s risk for growth in water is key for preventing it. Click on the links below to know more.

**At home:** Regularly clean devices that use water (i.e., humidifiers, CPAP machines), flush faucets, showerheads and toilets that are not frequently used, and after water pressure drops.

**In motor vehicles:** Always use windshield cleaner fluid from known manufacturers.

**In buildings and public hot tubs:** Building owners and managers should have a water management program to control *Legionella*.



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