

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE 10/23/15

TO: Grant County Healthcare Providers

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Local Legionellosis Cluster

2 Chelan residents and 1 Okanogan resident

Grant County Health Officer, Dr. Alexander Brzezny, has issued the following precautionary alert to the Grant County healthcare community: ***Legionella pneumophila* serogroup 1 antigen in urine was confirmed in 3 residents of our region since mid-October 2015.** Two are Chelan residents and the third resides in Okanogan. All patients are >50 years old and have a history of smoking. None have travelled outside of North Central Washington. All 3 have been hospitalized.

Chelan Douglas Health District and Okanogan Public Health are investigating the possible sources of exposure for the 3 cases. So far, one of the cases was determined to have most likely been exposed to the bacteria via a swamp cooler.

Signs and Symptoms of Legionellosis

There are two clinically distinct illnesses caused by *Legionella* bacteria:

Legionnaires' Disease, can have symptoms like many other forms of pneumonia, so it can be hard to diagnose at first. Signs can include:

- Cough
- Shortness of breath
- High fever
- Muscle aches
- headaches

These symptoms usually begin 2 to 10 days after being exposed to the bacteria, but people should watch for symptoms for about 2 weeks after exposure.

Pontiac fever, a milder infection, causes symptoms similar to those of Legionnaires' disease and usually last for 2 to 5 days. Pontiac fever is different from Legionnaires' disease because the patient does not have pneumonia. Symptoms go away on their own without treatment.

Sources of *Legionella*

Legionella bacteria can be found in natural, freshwater environments, but they are present in insufficient numbers to cause disease. Potable (drinking) water systems, whirlpool spas, and cooling towers provide the three conditions needed for *Legionella* transmission—heat, stasis, and aerosolization—therefore, these are common sources of outbreaks. Hot water systems (showers), evaporative condensers, humidifiers, respiratory therapy devices, decorative fountains, and potting soil have also been implicated epidemiologically in outbreaks.



Epidemiologic Risk Factors for Legionellosis

- Recent travel with an overnight stay outside of the home
- Exposure to whirlpool spas
- Recent repairs or maintenance work on domestic plumbing
- Renal or hepatic failure
- Diabetes
- Systemic malignancy
- Smoking
- Immune system disorders
- Age > 50 years

Who to Test for Legionellosis

- Patients who have failed outpatient antibiotic therapy
- Patients with severe pneumonia, in particular those requiring intensive care
- Immunocompromised host with pneumonia
- Patients with pneumonia in the setting of a legionellosis outbreak
- Patients with a travel history [Patients that have traveled away from their home within two weeks before the onset of illness.]
- Patients suspected of healthcare-associated pneumonia

How to Test for Legionellosis

Urinary antigen assay AND culture of respiratory secretions on selective media are the preferred diagnostic tests for Legionnaires' disease.

Preferred Treatment for Legionellosis

If your patient has Legionnaires' disease, please see the most recent [guidelines from IDSA](http://cid.oxfordjournals.org/content/44/Supplement_2/S27.full) for treatment of community-acquired pneumonia. (http://cid.oxfordjournals.org/content/44/Supplement_2/S27.full)

If your patient has Pontiac fever, antibiotic therapy should not be prescribed. It is a self-limited illness that does not benefit from antibiotic treatment. Complete recovery usually occurs within 1 week.

Legal Reporting Requirements

- **Health care providers:** notifiable to GCHD within 24 hours
- **Health care facilities:** notifiable to GCHD within 24 hours
- **Laboratories:** Legionella species notifiable to GCHD within 24 hours; specimen submission is required – culture (2 business days)

Resources

<http://www.cdc.gov/legionella/clinicians.html>

<https://www.osha.gov/dts/osta/otm/legionnaires/faq.html>

<http://www.cdc.gov/legionella/downloads/case-report-form.pdf>

<http://www.doh.wa.gov/ForPublicHealthandHealthcareProviders/NotifiableConditions/Legionellosis>

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