



June 26, 2019

## Public Health Advisory Increase in Cases of Legionnaires' disease

The City of Amarillo Public Health Department has received reports of an increased number of Legionnaires' cases in our community. Legionnaires' disease is a type of pneumonia caused by *Legionella* bacteria. People who get sick after being exposed to *Legionella* can develop two different illnesses: Legionnaires' disease and Pontiac fever. Exposure is through breathing in mist (such as in hot tubs, showers, cooling towers, and decorative fountains) that has been contaminated with *Legionella*.

**Legionnaires' disease** is similar to other pneumonias, with symptoms that include:

- Cough
- Shortness of breath
- Fever
- Muscle aches
- Headaches

It can also be associated with diarrhea, nausea, and confusion.

**Pontiac fever** symptoms are primarily fever and muscle aches. Patients with Pontiac fever do not develop pneumonia. It is a milder infection than Legionnaires' disease.

Most healthy people do not get sick after being exposed to *Legionella*. Those at increased risk of getting sick are:

- People 50 years or older
- Current or former smokers
- People with a chronic lung disease (like chronic obstructive pulmonary disease or emphysema)
- People with a weak immune system from diseases like cancer, diabetes, or kidney failure
- People who take drugs that suppress (weaken) the immune system (like after a transplant operation or chemotherapy)

**Patients exhibiting the symptoms of Legionellosis or Pontiac Fever should be screened by ordering Legionella Urine Antigen testing. Those with pneumonia should also have a Legionella sputum culture on media that supports growth of Legionella from lower respiratory secretions, lung tissue, pleural fluid, or a normally sterile site.** Legionellosis is a Texas Notifiable Condition and should be reported to our Communicable Disease staff at phone number 806-378-6321 or fax number 806-378-6306. Public Health may arrange for positive cultures to be sent for additional testing.

### City of Amarillo Department of Public Health

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