



# PUBLIC HEALTH ADVISORY UPDATE: Legionellosis Increase In Case Count

July 23, 2013

Franklin County Public Health and  
Columbus Public Health

## What you need to know

Franklin County Public Health (FCPH) continues to investigate a Legionellosis outbreak associated with the Wesley Ridge Retirement Community, located at 2225 Taylor Park in Reynoldsburg.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Ohio Department of Health (ODH) are also assisting with the investigation. As of Tuesday, July 23, 2013, a total of 27 cases are confirmed. The age range is 63-99 years of age. There have been two deaths.

### Ongoing Investigation

FCPH, CDC and ODH are working together to complete case interviews and investigations as well as patient chart review. The data is being compiled and reviewed to see if a common source can be determined.

The Wesley Ridge Retirement Community has followed all recommendations to limit additional exposure to their residents, employees and visitors. They hired a contractor and remediation at the facility was completed last week.

## What to watch for

People usually develop symptoms within 2 to 10 days of exposure to the bacteria, including:

- Fever, chills
- Cough, which may be dry or may produce phlegm
- Muscle aches, headache
- Tiredness, loss of appetite
- Pontiac Fever is a milder form that includes fever and muscle aches, but without pneumonia.

Symptoms of Legionnaires' disease are similar to other types of pneumonia, so other specialized tests are needed for diagnosis.

## What you can do

Healthcare providers should perform *Legionella* urine antigen and *Legionella* culture of respiratory specimens (sputum or bronchoalveolar lavage [BAL]) on patients presenting with pneumonia symptoms who have visited, work, or reside at Wesley Ridge. Respiratory specimens should be plated on *Legionella*-specific agar or should be frozen and stored at -20 degrees Fahrenheit if the agar is not available.

All clinical *Legionella* isolates must be saved for further testing at the CDC. Please call the Infectious Disease Reporting System (IDRS) at **614 525-8888** for questions regarding specimen handling, testing and reporting.

What is this? [Learn more about this emergency notification system.](#)

## Who is at risk

Anyone can develop Legionnaires' disease, but the illness most often affects middle-aged and older persons and those with compromised immune systems. Pontiac fever most commonly occurs in persons who are otherwise healthy.

Legionnaires' disease can be very serious and can cause death in up to 5% to 30% of cases. Most cases can be treated successfully with antibiotics, and healthy people usually recover from infection.

### Transmission

The *Legionella* bacteria are found naturally in the environment, usually in water. The bacteria grow best in warm water, like the kind found in hot tubs, cooling towers, hot water tanks, large plumbing systems, or air-conditioning systems of large buildings. They do not seem to grow in car or window air-conditioners.

People get Legionnaires' disease when they breathe in a mist or vapor (small droplets of water in the air) that has been contaminated with the bacteria. Legionellosis is not passed from person to person.

## To learn more

CDC *Legionella* Information for Clinicians:  
<http://www.cdc.gov/legionella/clinicians.html>

For additional information on this Legionellosis outbreak, contact FCPH at **614 525-3097** or IDRS at **614 525-8888**.