

WHAT IS LEGIONELLA?

Legionella is a group of bacteria found in natural water sources, such as lakes, streams and groundwater. It can also be found in human-made water systems and devices.

Legionella can become a health concern when it grows in these systems and devices, and is inhaled in the form of droplets and mists released into the air.



CONDITIONS THAT SUPPORT LEGIONELLA GROWTH



- Warm temperatures
- Standing or still water



- Settled particles and biofilm (a slimy, glue-like material containing microorganisms and nutrients)

HEALTH EFFECTS OF LEGIONELLA

Legionella can cause two types of illness in humans: Legionnaires' disease and Pontiac fever.



Legionnaires' disease is a serious respiratory illness that results in pneumonia, lasting weeks to months, and can lead to death.



Pontiac fever is a milder illness, causing flu-like symptoms. People with Pontiac fever generally recover in 2 to 5 days without treatment.

WHO IS AT GREATEST RISK?

- People over 40 years of age 
- Current and former smokers 
- People with chronic lung disease 
- People with underlying illnesses and weakened immune systems 

HOW TO REDUCE YOUR RISK?

- Maintain your water heater temperature at 60°C  To reduce the risk of scalding, the temperature of the water at the tap should be no higher than 49°C. You should contact a qualified plumber to install mixing valves to control the tap water temperature.
- Regularly clean and disinfect mist-producing devices in your home (shower heads, humidifiers, hot tubs) according to manufacturer directions
- Run the hot and cold water taps for a few minutes after not using them for more than two weeks
- Periodically drain and flush your water heater, according to manufacturer directions, to reduce settled particles

NEED MORE INFORMATION? www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/infectious-diseases/legionella.htm