



Genesee County Health Department

Mark Valacak, M.P.H., Health Officer
Gary K. Johnson, M.D., M.P.H., Medical Director

DATE: January 14, 2016 **END DATE:** January 30, 2016
CONTACT: Suzanne Cupal, MPH
PHONE: (810) 768-7970
RE: Legionnaires Disease Increase in Genesee County

The Genesee County Health Department (GCHD) would like to provide additional information regarding the announcement of an increase in the number of legionellosis cases in Genesee County. Legionellosis is a respiratory infection characterized by the bacteria *Legionella* and can present as either Legionnaire's disease or as a milder illness called Pontiac fever. Legionnaire's symptoms include fever, cough, shortness of breath, muscle aches, clinical pneumonia, and sometimes diarrhea and abdominal pain. Pontiac fever has similar symptoms but does not progress to pneumonia. Antibiotics are highly effective against *Legionella* bacteria.

Legionella bacteria are commonly found in the environment (rivers, lakes, streams). It is a waterborne disease, usually located in man-made water supplies that aerosolize water, such as showers, hot water tanks, humidifiers, cooling towers, whirlpool spas, and decorative fountains. People get Legionnaire's disease when they breathe in a mist or vapor containing the bacteria. Aspiration is the most common way that bacteria enters the lungs. The bacteria are not spread from one person to another person. **One cannot become ill from drinking water containing *Legionella*.** Water does not need to be filtered to remove *legionella*. People who are at most risk of developing legionellosis are those who are older, smokers/former smokers, immunosuppressed, or who have other underlying or chronic health conditions.

Proper maintenance and disinfection of hot water tanks, humidifiers, cooling towers, whirlpool spas, and decorative fountains are the most effective measures in preventing outbreaks. Maintaining hot water systems at 50°C or higher may reduce the risk of transmission.

Page 1 of 2

Better Life Through Better Health

Floyd J. McCree Courts & Human Services Building ♦ 630 S. Saginaw Street, Ste. 4 ♦ Flint, Michigan 48502-1540

Burton Branch ♦ G-3373 S. Saginaw Street ♦ Burton, Michigan 48529

Main Phone 810-257-3612 ♦ Visit us at: www.gchd.us

GCHD has worked closely with the local medical centers to provide information about *Legionella* and clinical guidance about legionellosis infections. A Legionnaire's disease fact sheet is posted on the GCHD website at www.gchd.us. GCHD continues to conduct surveillance for legionellosis cases. Our motto is "Better Life Through Better Health."

###

Page 2 of 2

Better Life Through Better Health

Floyd J. McCree Courts & Human Services Building ♦ 630 S. Saginaw Street, Ste. 4 ♦ Flint, Michigan 48502-1540

Burton Branch ♦ G-3373 S. Saginaw Street ♦ Burton, Michigan 48529

Main Phone 810-257-3612 ♦ Visit us at: www.gchd.us