

DATE: March 24, 2016 **END DATE:** March 26, 2016
CONTACT: Suzanne Cupal, MPH
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RE: Legionnaires Disease Presentation

The Genesee County Health Department (GCHD) is supporting Charity United Methodist Church in presenting a Legionnaires disease community conversation Saturday, March 26, 2016 at the church located at 4601 Clio Road in Flint. The presentation and conversation will take place from 2 pm-4 pm. Dr. Janet Stout will be presenting basic information about *Legionella*, the bacteria that causes Legionnaires disease. Dr. Stout is the director of Special Pathogens Laboratory and research associate professor at the University of Pittsburgh, Swanson School of Engineering in the Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering. A clinical and environmental microbiologist, Dr. Stout is recognized worldwide for more than 30 years of pioneering research in *Legionella*. Dr. Stout has been consulting with GCHD over the last year. She will be followed by Suzanne Cupal, MPH, a Public Health Supervisor at the Genesee County Health Department who will share specific information regarding Genesee County Legionnaires cases and Legionnaires disease prevention strategies.

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. See your doctor if you have high fever, cough, muscle aches or shortness of breath.

Proper maintenance and disinfection of hot water tanks, humidifiers, cooling towers, whirlpool spas, and decorative fountains are the most effective measures in preventing outbreaks.

GCHD continues to work 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 enhanced surveillance for legionellosis cases.