

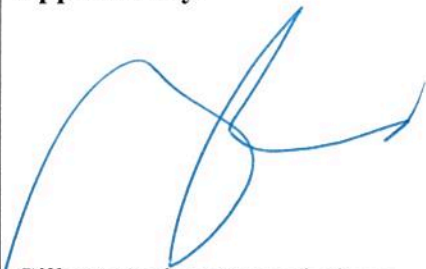


**Department of
Homeless Services**

PROCEDURE NUMBER

16-001

Subject: Handling of Suspected Cases of Bacterial Pneumonia, Including Legionnaires' Disease	Applicable To: All DHS Directly Operated or Provider Facilities/Programs Serving Homeless Individuals and Families	Effective Date: August 24, 2015
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Administered By Deputy Commissioners for Administration, Adult Services, Family Services, Capacity Planning and Development (CPD), and Security; Associate Commissioners for Operations, and Transitional Services; Program Administrators in Adult Services and Family Services	Approved By:  Gilbert Taylor, Commissioner
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Important Note: Information in this Procedure was obtained from sources including the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

I. PURPOSE

The New York City Department of Homeless Services (“DHS” or “Agency”) is committed to providing a safe and healthy environment for clients and employees. In pursuit of this endeavor, DHS has implemented the following plan to educate our community and address and treat the symptoms of bacterial pneumonia, including Legionnaires’ disease.

II. INTRODUCTION

If you or someone you know experiences respiratory symptoms associated with Legionnaires’ disease, such as fever, cough, chills and muscle aches, seek medical attention right away.

- A. Definition: Legionnaires' disease is a severe form of pneumonia - lung inflammation usually caused by infection. Legionnaires' disease is caused by a bacterium known as legionella.
- B. Transmission: Legionnaires' disease cannot be transmitted from person-to-person contact. Instead, Legionnaires' disease is contracted from inhaling the bacteria. Older adults, smokers and people with weakened immune systems are particularly susceptible to Legionnaires' disease.
- C. Causes: The bacterium Legionella pneumophila is responsible for most cases of Legionnaires' disease. Outdoors, legionella bacteria survive in soil and water but rarely cause infections. Indoors, legionella bacteria can multiply in various types of water systems — hot tubs, air conditioners and mist sprayers in grocery store produce departments.

Although it is possible to contract Legionnaires' disease from home plumbing systems, most outbreaks have occurred in large buildings, perhaps because complex systems allow the bacteria to grow and spread more easily.

- D. How the infection spreads: Most people become infected when they inhale microscopic water droplets containing legionella bacteria. This might be the spray from a shower, faucet or whirlpool, or water dispersed through the ventilation system in a large building. Outbreaks have been linked to a range of sources, including:
 - Hot tubs and whirlpools on cruise ships
 - Cooling towers in air conditioning systems
 - Decorative fountains
 - Swimming pools
 - Physical therapy equipment
 - Water systems in hotels, hospitals and nursing homes

Although legionella bacteria primarily spread through aerosolized water droplets, the infection can be transmitted in other ways, including:

- Aspiration: This occurs when liquid accidentally enters the lungs, usually by coughing or choking while drinking. Aspirating water containing legionella bacteria may lead to contracting Legionnaires' disease.
 - Soil: A few people have contracted Legionnaires' disease after working in the garden or using contaminated potting soil.
- E. Symptoms: Legionnaires' disease usually develops two (2) to ten (10) days after exposure to legionella bacteria. It frequently begins with the following signs and symptoms:
 - Headache
 - Muscle pain
 - Chills
 - Fever that may be 104° F (40° C) or higher

By the second (2) or third (3) day, other signs and symptoms may include:

- Cough, which may bring up mucus and sometimes blood
- Shortness of breath
- Chest pain
- Gastrointestinal symptoms, such as nausea, vomiting and diarrhea
- Confusion or other mental changes

A mild form of Legionnaires' disease — known as Pontiac fever — may produce signs and symptoms including fever, chills, headache and muscle aches. Pontiac fever doesn't infect the lungs, and symptoms usually clear within two (2) to five (5) days.

F. Risk factors: Not everyone exposed to legionella bacteria becomes sick. However, infection is more likely based on the following risk factors:

- Smoking: Smoking damages the lungs, making a person more susceptible to all types of lung infections.
- Having a weakened immune system as a result of HIV/AIDS or certain medications, especially corticosteroids and drugs taken to prevent organ rejection after a transplant.
- Having a chronic lung disease such as emphysema or another serious condition such as diabetes, kidney disease or cancer.
- Being 50 years of age or older.

Legionnaires' disease is a sporadic and local problem in hospitals and nursing homes, where germs may spread easily and people are vulnerable to infection.

III. WHAT TO DO IF YOU THINK A CLIENT OR STAFF MEMBER HAS BEEN EXPOSED TO LEGIONELLA BACTERIA?

If you or someone you know, lives in the area where Legionella was identified, and experience respiratory symptoms, such as fever, cough, chills and muscle aches, seek medical attention right away.

- A. Have a symptomatic individual see a doctor as soon as possible, or call 911, if symptoms are severe.
- B. Shelter staff must notify their DHS Program Administrator within one hour.
- C. If a private physician or DOHMH alerts you that your client was diagnosed with Legionella, notify your Program Administrator within one hour.
- D. DHS Program Administrators must notify their Assistant/Associate Commissioner and the Medical Director within one hour.

- E. DHS Assistant/Associate Commissioners must notify the DHS Deputy Commissioner for Adult Services or Family Services, respectively, as well as the Associate and Deputy Commissioners for Administration within an hour.
- F. The DHS Medical Director, in collaboration with DOHMH, shall coordinate the Agency's response to a potential outbreak. They will provide training about Legionnaires' disease.
- G. DHS Associate and Deputy Commissioners for Administration shall coordinate plans for cleaning the impacted areas within 24 with the Deputy Commissioners for Adult Services and Family Services and DOHMH.