



NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH  
AND MENTAL HYGIENE  
Dave A. Chokshi, MD MSc  
Commissioner

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
Wednesday, August 18, 2021

## HEALTH DEPARTMENT INVESTIGATING COMMUNITY CLUSTER OF LEGIONNAIRES' DISEASE IN AND AROUND CENTRAL HARLEM

*The Health Department is investigating a cluster of nine cases of Legionnaires' disease*

*Legionnaires' disease is not contagious and is treatable when caught early*

*Adults who have been in the affected area since August 1<sup>st</sup> with flu-like symptoms, fever, cough, or difficulty breathing should seek immediate medical attention*

**August 18, 2021** – The Health Department is currently investigating a community cluster of Legionnaires' disease in Central Harlem (zip codes 10037 and 10039) and bordering communities. Nine people have been diagnosed with Legionnaires' disease since August 9th. All have been hospitalized. Seven of the individuals were 50-years or older. To date, there have been no deaths associated with this cluster. The Health Department is actively investigating these cases and is sampling and testing water from all cooling tower systems in the area of the cluster. The Health Department will hold a virtual community meeting on Thursday, August 19, from 6PM to 7 PM. As always, New Yorkers with flu-like symptoms, cough, fever or difficulty breathing should contact a physician immediately. Due to the ongoing spread of COVID-19, people seeking care should be tested for COVID-19 and evaluated for Legionnaires' disease. People get Legionnaires' disease by breathing in water vapor that contains bacteria. Legionnaires' disease is not contagious. Legionnaires' disease can be treated with antibiotics when caught early.

“Anyone with flu-like symptoms should seek care early and – if they live in the affected area – ensure they are evaluated for Legionnaires' disease,” said **Health Commissioner Dr. Dave A. Chokshi**. “Most people exposed to *Legionella* don't get sick but there are people at higher risk, such as those 50 and older, especially those who smoke and have chronic lung conditions.”

Legionnaires' disease is a type of pneumonia that is caused by the bacteria *Legionella*, which grows in warm water. Symptoms resemble other types of pneumonia and can include fever, chills, muscle aches, and cough. Most cases of Legionnaires' disease can be traced to plumbing systems where conditions are favorable for *Legionella* growth, such as cooling towers, whirlpool spas, hot tubs, humidifiers, hot water tanks, and evaporative condensers of large air-conditioning systems.

Individuals only get sick by breathing in water vapor containing *Legionella* bacteria, and the disease is not transmitted from person to person. Individuals at higher risk include those ages 50 and above, cigarette smokers, and people with chronic lung disease or compromised immune

systems. People living or working in the area who are experiencing these symptoms should seek medical attention with a primary care provider or seek urgent care.

###

**#030-21**

**MEDIA CONTACT:** Patrick Gallahue/Michael Lanza ,  
[pressoffice@health.nyc.gov](mailto:pressoffice@health.nyc.gov)