



NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
AND MENTAL HYGIENE
Ashwin Vasani, MD, PhD
Commissioner

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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HEALTH DEPARTMENT PROVIDES UPDATE ON COMMUNITY CLUSTER OF LEGIONNAIRES' DISEASE IN THE HIGHBRIDGE NEIGHBORHOOD IN THE BRONX

Nineteen cases have been identified in New Yorkers in the area, one death has occurred

Adults who have been in the affected area since early May with flu-like symptoms, fever, cough, or difficulty breathing should seek immediate medical attention

The Health Department is conducting outreach in the impacted area to inform residents of the cluster and provide guidance for how and when to seek care

May 25, 2022 – The Health Department today provided an update on the investigation into a community cluster of [Legionnaires' disease](#) in the Highbridge neighborhood in the Bronx (ZIP codes 10452 and 10456) and bordering communities. Nineteen people have been diagnosed with Legionnaires' disease since May 3, 2022. One person has died, and 8 people are currently hospitalized. The Health Department has sampled the cooling towers in the area. Four cooling towers tested positive for the presence of *Legionella pneumophila*, a type of bacteria that causes Legionnaires' disease, and were immediately ordered to disinfect. Health Department inspectors will be following up to ensure compliance with disinfection protocols. Department staff are conducting outreach in the area to inform residents of the cluster and provide guidance for how best to protect themselves.

"We are saddened to hear about a death in a person who contracted Legionnaires'," said **Health Commissioner Dr. Ashwin Vasani**. "Health Department staff are working to ensure that buildings in the cluster area are treated and conditions remediated quickly. While most people exposed to the bacteria do not get sick, Legionnaires' disease can cause severe illness or be fatal for those at higher risk, including people pre-existing chronic health issues. That's why it's crucial that you seek health care as soon as you experience flu-like symptoms."

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 *Legionella* bacteria. Legionnaires' disease is not contagious and can be treated with antibiotics when caught early.

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. Legionnaires' disease can be caused by 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.

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