

Chief Health Officer Alert

3 December 2012

Status: Resolved

Legionnaires' disease – alert for Health professionals – 3 December 2012

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Date issued: 3 December 2012

Issued by: Dr Rosemary Lester, Chief Health Officer, Victoria

Issued to: Health professionals (especially those in the Bundoora area of Melbourne)

Key messages

- A small cluster of cases of Legionnaires' disease has been identified, involving three individuals who all report exposures in the Bundoora area, in Melbourne's north.
- Consider Legionnaires' disease in patients who have been around the Bundoora area with influenza-like symptoms, and particularly those with atypical pneumonia.
- Rapid confirmation can be obtained by urinary antigen testing. Sputum for culture should be sought in all cases if possible.
- Legionnaires' disease is a Group A notifiable condition which requires immediate notification to the Department of Health.

What is the issue?

The Department of Health has recently identified a small cluster of cases of Legionnaires' disease, involving three individuals who all report exposures in the Bundoora area. As part of the routine response to these cases, an environmental sample was taken from a cooling tower in the area, which may or may not be linked to these cases. This cooling tower has been decommissioned and disinfected as a precaution, pending results of testing. It will continue to be monitored.

Who is at risk?

People who have been around the Bundoora area since mid-November 2012.

Symptoms and transmission

Cases typically present with influenza-like symptoms such as headache, fever, rigors, cough or myalgia, and may progress to atypical pneumonia. Rapid confirmation of the diagnosis of *Legionella pneumophila* serogroup 1 (which makes up the majority of Victorian cases) can be obtained by urinary antigen testing. Sputum for culture should be sought in all cases if possible.

A four-fold rise in titre between acute and convalescent sera is also diagnostic, however, this may take two to four weeks to develop.

Prevention/treatment

Early diagnosis and treatment with appropriate antibiotics is important in reducing the severity of illness and the risk of severe complications. Referral to hospital is often required for confirmed cases. Empirical treatment of moderate or severe community-acquired pneumonia (as per Therapeutic Guidelines) is recommended to cover *Legionella* bacteria.

More information

Clinical information

Legionnaires' disease is a Group A notifiable condition which requires immediate notification to the Department by telephone on initial diagnosis (presumptive or confirmed) with written notification to follow within five days.

For further information or to notify a case please contact the Communicable Disease Prevention and Control Unit at the Department of Health on 1300 651 160 (business hours) or 1300 790 733 (after hours) or go to: <http://ideas.health.vic.gov.au/bluebook/legionellosis.asp>

Consumer Information

A fact sheet for consumers can be downloaded from the Better Health Channel:

http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/bhcv2/bhcarticles.nsf/pages/Legionnaires_disease?open

Yours sincerely



Dr Rosemary Lester
Chief Health Officer

Authorised by the Victorian Government, Melbourne.