

Legionnaires Disease Infects 12 In Flushing, Queens

The poisoned water in Flint has caused many people to be afraid. You may have noticed an increase of people buying bottled water. Not everyone though, is doing it because they are afraid of germs. There has been an increase of people nationwide catching infections from Legionnaires disease. Most recently, 12 cases of Legionnaires disease has been confirmed in the neighborhood of Flushing, found in New York, Queens Borough.

What is Legionnaires Disease?

Legionnaires disease is caused by a bacterium called Legionella. If you have ever experienced pneumonia, it carries similar symptoms to those who are suffering from severe lung inflammation. It is not contagious, so you can't catch it from person to person contact. You get it from inhaling the bacteria. It is mainly transmitted by drinking water that contains the bacterium.

Someone who catches it will suffer from a very serious form of pneumonia. Symptoms are headache, muscle ache, a very high fever, and chills. After a couple days of being infected, you will start to cough, and your cough may even have blood in it. Also chest pain, gastrointestinal symptoms, chest pain, and even mental illness can occur. Some people have reported becoming confused.

If you have experienced any of these symptoms, seeing your doctor as soon as possible is very imperative. The quicker you are treated, the better your recovery will be.

This Legionella bacteria lives and breeds in soil and water. Water systems can cause these bacteria to multiply. Outbreaks are connected to water systems such as:

- Hot tubs/whirlpools
- Grocery store mist machines
- Cooling towers in air conditioning systems
- Decorative water fountains
- Public and even private swimming pools
- Physical Therapy Equipment (Such as water massages)
- Hotels, Hospitals, and nursing homes water systems

What Increases Your Risk of Getting Legionnaires Disease?

Getting exposed to legionella bacteria does not automatically mean that you will get sick. You increase the chances of being infected with the disease if you:

- Smoke. Smoking makes it easier for you to contract a lung infection.
- Weak Immune System- If you are already sick from HIV/AIDS, or taking medication, that can weaken your immune system and make you more susceptible to Legionnaires disease.

- Lung disease- Already having a lung disease increases your chances.
- Are over the age of 50.

What Are The Complications?

You can suffer respiratory failure from this disease. Once your lungs are not able to remove the carbon dioxide from your blood, it shuts down. A sudden drop in your blood pressure can occur, causing septic shock. And lastly, your kidneys can shut down causing kidney failure.

How Can Legionnaires Disease Be Prevented?

Quitting smoking or not even trying out a cigarette at all can do a lot to preventing a lung disease from occurring in your body.

What's most effective though, is having companies in charge of water systems regularly disinfect and clean the water systems. Companies really need to step up their cleaning measures to prevent this outbreak from happening again.

Outbreak In Queens

The City Health Department in Queens has announced that at least 12 people in their borough currently have the disease in Flushing. The patients are ages 30-80, and most of them already have a pre-existing serious health condition. Five of them are in the hospital at this time.

This disease is diagnosed through a blood test. A chest X-ray can show the extent of damage that has been done to your lungs. Also if you are experiencing neurological problems, a CT scan of your brain can be done.

Antibiotics are used to treat this disease. It can only be fatal when the person infected already has a weak immune system.

In 2015, the mayor of New York City promised to inspect air conditioning towers because this disease had killed 12 people there and left 127 people sick. Every year there is 200-400 people infected in New York City.

Here are some quotes from some concerned citizens of New York:

"As with our previous Legionnaires' disease investigations, we are in the process of investigating the source of the cluster and are working with building owners in the area to rapidly test and clean cooling towers," said Health Commissioner Dr. Mary Bassett.

"It makes me a little worried because my daughter is sick now," one man said. "I'm gonna check with my pediatrician, see what they say."

"We're not giving streets, not giving you a border because we want people in the area not to say 'oh, I live north of the area, so I'm not going to worry about my cough and fever'," Dr. Demetre Daskalakis from the department of health said.

How Common Is Legionnaires Disease?

From Flint to Flushing, outbreaks are becoming common in United States.

Many people believe Legionnaires Disease is rare, but in actuality it is not. Many cases go unreported. Some have estimated that as many as 100,000 people get reported every year. Because the cases spring up so randomly, it is hard to keep track of it. Even when a lawsuit comes out of it, it is settled quickly. Why? Because the big companies that are responsible for these water systems don't want their names to be tarnished. They make enough revenue to keep the water systems disinfected, but rather would spend time on lavish vacations, and expensive cars.

This disease will always remain a threat if hospitals don't step up in making preventative measures. Most hospitals in United States just dismiss it as pneumonia, and don't have the special tests performed. This results in an incorrect diagnosis.

A study in Ohio came up with the conclusion that only 3 percent of Legionnaires infected patients are accurately diagnosed. Many deaths are occurring without people ever knowing that it was because of this disease. More efforts have to be made. It starts with the companies and ends with us. We have to be more persistent with getting water systems cleaned. We have to stay alert to symptoms so treatment can be done in an orderly fashion.

Sources:

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