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DOH-PINELLAS INVESTIGATING TWO LEGIONELLOSIS CASES



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The Florida Department of Health in Pinellas County (DOH-Pinellas) is investigating two cases of legionellosis within the same apartment community. Per Florida Statute, the department does not disclose the locations of active investigations.

Legionellosis is a disease caused by a bacterium called *Legionella*, which is naturally found in the environment, usually in water. The bacteria grow best in warm water and can thrive in hot tubs, detachable shower nozzles, cooling towers, hot water tanks, large plumbing systems or parts of the air-conditioning systems of large buildings.

People can become ill when they breathe in a mist or vapor (small droplets of water in the air) contaminated with Legionella. The disease is not spread by contact with an infected person.

Legionellosis can present in one of the following ways: as Legionnaires' disease or as Pontiac fever. Symptoms of Legionnaires' disease usually begin two to 10 days after exposure to the bacteria and can consist of a high fever, chills, cough and pneumonia. In severe cases, it can be fatal. Pontiac fever is a milder illness and may not cause pneumonia.

Individuals most at risk of getting sick and developing complications from legionellosis include adults age 50 or older, as well as those who smoke, have chronic lung disease such as emphysema, have weak immune systems from conditions like cancer, diabetes, or kidney failure or who take drugs that weaken the immune system.

Most healthy individuals who are exposed to Legionella do not develop symptoms. They can recover from the infection after treatment with antibiotics.

For information about legionellosis, go to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's website here: <http://www.cdc.gov/legionella/index.html>.

Go to www.PinellasHealth.com or call (727) 824-6900 for information about DOH-Pinellas. Follow us on Twitter @HealthyPinellas.

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