

Legionnaires' Disease — What you should know

August 12, 2025

What is Legionnaires' Disease?

- Legionnaires' disease is a type of pneumonia. It is caused by bacteria (Legionella) that grows in warm water. Legionnaires' disease causes flu-like symptoms, and complications from the disease can be fatal.
- Symptoms include fever, chills, body aches and a cough. You may also have headaches, fatigue, loss of appetite, confusion or diarrhea
- If you have these symptoms, please see a doctor right away.
- People usually develop symptoms 2 to 10 days after exposure, though it can be as long as two weeks.
- Legionnaires' disease is not spread from person to person. You cannot get Legionnaires' disease from someone who is sick.

Who Gets Legionnaires' Disease?

- Most exposed people do not develop Legionnaires' Disease

- Extremely rare in children

- Never seen in pets

Highest risk

- Over the age of 50
- Smokers
- Underlying health conditions such as lung disease, diabetes, immunosuppression

How do you get it?

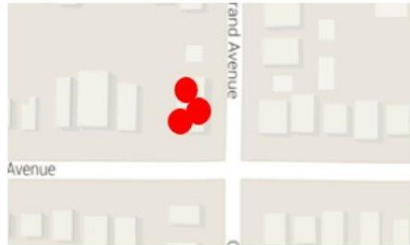
- You can only get Legionnaires' disease by breathing in water vapor containing the bacteria from sources such as cooling towers or sometimes showers or hot tubs. People who are sick with this disease cannot make others sick.
- In this investigation in Central Harlem, the likely source of the bacteria causing this pneumonia in the community is a cooling tower(s) in the affected area.
- Cooling towers are water systems usually found on the top of buildings and are responsible for regulating the temperature of cooling systems such as central air conditioning or refrigeration.

COOLING TOWER

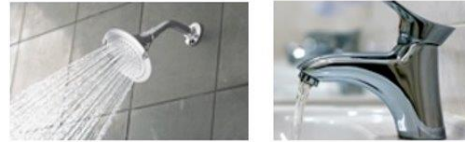
**NOT a cooling tower!
This is a water tank**



Community Investigation versus a Building Investigation



- Indoor
 - Potable water systems



- Outdoor
 - Cooling towers



Central Harlem Situational Update

(as of Tuesday 8/12/25)

Cases Confirmed

90

Currently Hospitalized

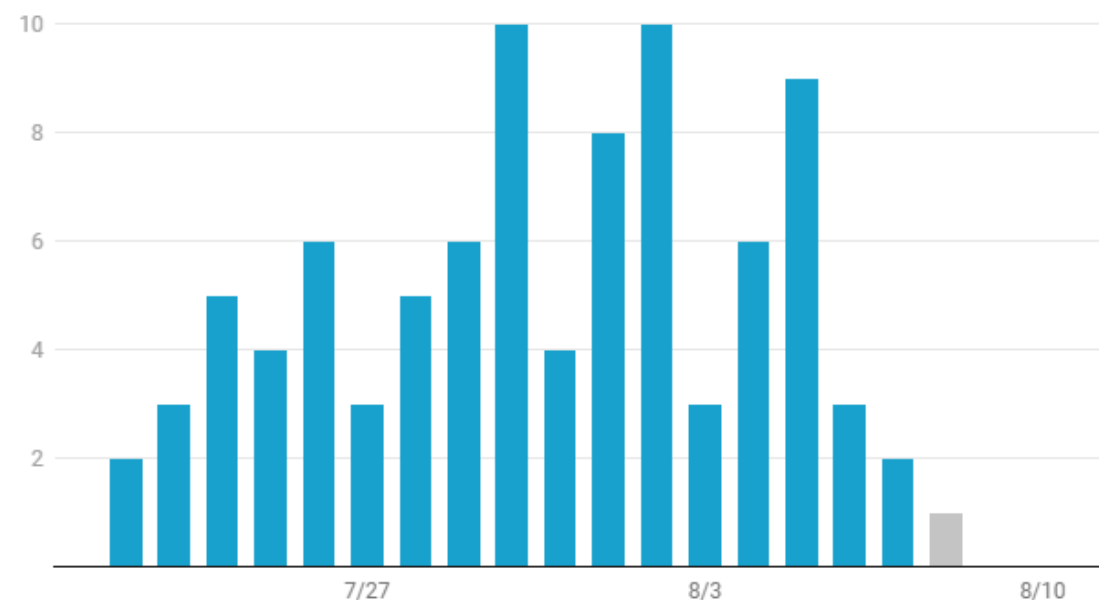
15

Deaths

3

Patients Newly Diagnosed with Legionnaires' Disease in the Central Harlem Cluster

Data are preliminary and subject to change. Due to delays in reporting, recent data (in gray) are incomplete.



Based on date of positive test in ZIP codes 10027, 10030, 10035, 10037, and 10039

[Get the data](#) • Created with [Datavwrapper](#)

What is the Health Department doing?

- The NYC Health Department has sampled and tested the water from cooling towers in the investigation zone.
- There are two tests that we run:

Preliminary test (PCR) which tests for the presence of any (alive or dead) Legionella bacteria. This test comes back within days and allows us to act quickly with initial remediation steps.

Confirmatory test (Culture) which tests for live Legionella bacteria. This test takes approximately 2 weeks to complete.

- Any cooling towers with initial positive results for Legionella bacteria have completed the treatment required by the Health Department.
- We are continuing to monitor and let buildings know if additional treatment is needed.

Key Takeaways

- If you or your loved ones have flu-like symptoms, please see a doctor right away.
- We are starting to see less cases – this is good news and indicates that the source of the legionella bacteria has likely been eliminated
- The Health Department will continue to:
 - Track Legionnaires cases in the community
 - Follow up with building owners to require treatment if needed
- You can continue to drink water, bathe, shower, cook and use your air conditioner.

Questions or need more information?

Call 311

Visit nyc.gov/health/legionnaires

Email communityaffairs@health.nyc.gov

