



## DUTCHESS COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF BEHAVIORAL & COMMUNITY HEALTH

85 Civic Center Plaza, Poughkeepsie, NY 1201

# Healthcare Provider Advisory

September 17, 2021

### **DBCH Advises Providers to Consider Legionnaires' Disease in Patients with Pneumonia or risk factors**

**Poughkeepsie...** The Dutchess County Department of Behavioral and Community Health (DBCH) has observed a higher trend of reported Legionnaires' disease (LD) cases for 2021. There have been 14 confirmed cases year to date 2021, with most cases being reported since spring, compared to seven total cases in 2019 and only four total cases in 2020. Legionnaires' disease is a serious type of pneumonia caused by bacteria called Legionella. While most healthy people do not get Legionnaire's disease after being exposed to Legionella, there are certain people who are at increased risk.

With the increase in reported cases, DBCH is advising healthcare providers to test for Legionnaires' disease when patients show symptoms that include cough, shortness of breath, fever and muscle aches, similar to other pneumonias. This diagnosis is particularly important to consider for those who are at increased risk including those who are:

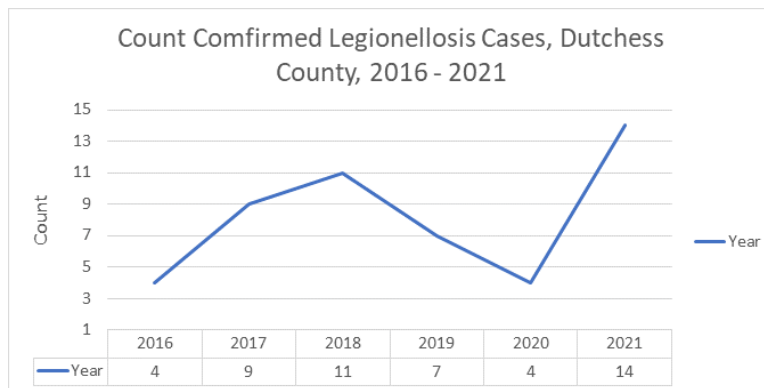
- 50 years or older
- Current or former smokers
- Have underlying health conditions
- Have weakened immune system from disease or medications they may be on
- Have exposure risks, such as travel or resident in a healthcare setting during incubation period

**The Department of Behavioral & Community Health advises local providers clinicians to consider the following:**

- **Healthcare providers should specifically request testing Legionellosis.** Legionnaires' disease is best diagnosed by Urine Ag, CT, and sputum culture. Contact laboratory provider to inquire about obtaining testing
- **Legionella can also be detected by PCR testing.** Lower respiratory specimens should ideally be obtained before initiation of antibiotics, although antibiotics should not be delayed to obtain a specimen. Routine bacteriologic culture of respiratory tract specimens will not detect Legionella. Tests are easily accessible through your laboratory provider.

- With molecular typing of isolates, a patient’s isolate(s) can be compared to isolates from environmental sources and other patients to identify a potential source of infection, as in this cluster. If a urine antigen test is positive for *Legionella*, then a respiratory culture specifically for Legionella should be requested. These specimens will be shipped to CDC for culture and further classification. We do not recommend serological testing to diagnose LD or the testing of patients who do not have LD symptoms.
- **Healthcare providers must report cases of Legionellosis to the Local Health Department where the patient resides.** For Dutchess County, cases are to be reported to the Department at 845-486-3566.

There is natural seasonality in reported cases of Legionnaires’ disease, with most reports occurring in summer months. However, with the higher number of reported cases compared to past years, DBCH has been coordinating with New York State Department of Health to determine if there are any specific trends. Currently, there is no common source of exposure or other commonality among the cases, although the investigation is ongoing.



According to the CDC, Legionella bacteria are found naturally in freshwater environments, like lakes and streams. The bacteria can become a health concern when they grow and spread in human-made building water systems such as hot tubs, cooling towers, hot water tanks, potable water systems, and decorative fountains, where people may breathe in small droplets in the air. When people are exposed to the bacteria, it can cause Legionnaires’ disease, a respiratory disease that can infect the lungs and cause pneumonia. Symptoms generally develop 2-14 days following exposure. Legionnaires’ disease is not usually transmitted from one person to another person.

The CDC offers an easy-to-read [fact sheet about Legionnaires’ disease](#) for patient education.

New York State Department of Health also recently issued a [health advisory regarding Legionellosis](#) for reference.

For more information or questions, contact Dutchess County Division of Communicable Disease at 845-486-3402.

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