

Thursday, 26 May 2022

## **PUBLIC HEALTH ALERT – LEGIONNAIRES’ DISEASE**

NSW Health is advising people who have been in the Sydney CBD area in the past ten days to be on the lookout for symptoms of Legionnaires’ disease as five people who have developed the disease spent time in the area in the last three weeks.

All five people have been identified with the bacteria that causes Legionnaires’ disease, which is often associated with contaminated cooling towers of large buildings. People can be exposed to the bacteria if contaminated water particles from the cooling system are emitted into the air and breathed in.

The five people, two women and three men, ranging in age from their 40s to 70s, independently visited locations between Museum Station, York Street, Park Street and Martin Place in the 10 days prior to their onset of symptoms. All five people have been admitted to hospital for treatment for pneumonia.

Symptoms of Legionnaires’ disease can develop up to 10 days from the time of exposure to contaminated water particles in the air and include fever, chills, a cough and shortness of breath and may lead to severe chest infections such as pneumonia.

People who develop Legionnaires’ disease are diagnosed by chest x-ray and a urine test and usually require antibiotic treatment in hospital.

NSW Health environmental health officers are working with the City of Sydney to review testing and maintenance records of all cooling towers in the CBD area to prioritise inspection and sampling of potential source towers.

These five cases follow a number of recently identified cases of Legionnaires’ disease throughout Sydney. Public Health Units across NSW follow up every case of Legionnaires’ disease and work closely with local councils in the management of cooling towers.

Routine testing of cooling towers helps identify contamination early and allows for prompt cleaning and corrective actions. Legionnaires’ disease cannot be spread from person to person.

Building owners should ensure that their cooling towers are well maintained and that they are compliant with the requirements of the *Public Health Regulation 2012*.

For more information about water cooling systems management contact your local Public Health Unit on 1300 066 055 or visit

<https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/environment/legionellacontrol/Pages/default.aspx>

For more information on Legionnaires' disease:

[https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/factsheets/Pages/legionnaires\\_disease.asp](https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/factsheets/Pages/legionnaires_disease.asp)

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