

Media Release

Legionnaires' disease alert for Sydney CBD

Thursday, 10 April 2025

NSW Health is advising people who have been in the Sydney CBD area in the past 10 days to be vigilant for symptoms of Legionnaires' disease, including fever, chills, a cough and shortness of breath.

Six people, who are not known to each other, have developed Legionnaires' disease after spending time in the CBD in the past three weeks.

Legionnaires' disease is caused by infection with *Legionella* bacteria. Outbreaks sometimes occur when bacteria from environmental sources such as cooling towers atop large buildings become contaminated. Legionnaires' disease is not spread from person to person.

South Eastern Sydney Local Health District Public Health Unit Director Dr Vicky Sheppeard said all six people have been admitted to hospital.

Dr Sheppeard said the source of the infection is not yet known and it is possible not all the cases are linked.

"People are exposed if contaminated water particles from a cooling system are in the air and then breathed in," Dr Sheppeard said.

"Symptoms can develop up to 10 days after exposure and include fever, chills, a cough and shortness of breath and may lead to severe chest infections such as pneumonia.

"Those most at risk include elderly people, people with underlying lung or other serious health conditions, and smokers."

NSW Health is working closely with the City of Sydney, reviewing maintenance records of cooling towers in the CBD area to prioritise towers to be inspected and sampled.

Building owners should ensure that their cooling towers are operated and maintained in compliance with the NSW Public Health Regulation 2022.

If unwell, please seek medical advice. For non-life-threatening health concerns call healthdirect on 1800 022 222 (this service is free and available 24 hours a day).

For more information on management of water-cooling systems contact your local public health unit on 1300 066 055 or <https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/environment/legionellacontrol/Pages/default.aspx>

For more information on Legionnaires' disease visit:
https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/factsheets/Pages/legionnaires_disease.aspx

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