



- Please immediately bring to the attention of all doctors -

Date: 20 November 2009 Contact telephone number: **8226-7177 (24 hours/7 days)**

RECENT INCREASE IN LEGIONELLA CASES

The Communicable Disease Control Branch has identified a recent increase in cases of *Legionella pneumophila* Serogroup 1 infection, particularly in metropolitan Adelaide. In 2009, to date, there have been 15 cases reported (4 confirmed and 11 probable), with 6 cases (3 confirmed and 3 probable) in the last 2 months. In 2006 there were 15 cases (10 confirmed and 5 probable); in 2007 there were 3 cases (one confirmed and 2 probable); and in 2008 there was one confirmed case.

Infection with *Legionella pneumophila* Serogroup 1 (Legionnaires' disease) usually causes pneumonia, which is often severe. Symptoms include fever, cough, chest pain, shortness of breath, anorexia, malaise, myalgia, headache, abdominal pain and diarrhoea. The disease is more common in middle aged and older people and those who are immunocompromised. Other risk factors include smoking, chronic heart or lung disease, diabetes and renal disease.

Legionella pneumophila bacteria are widespread in natural water sources and can colonise water systems. The infection can be transmitted from environmental sources such as cooling towers, hot water systems, hot and cold water taps, showers, nebulisers, spa baths and spa pools, hydrotherapy pools and ornamental fountains. The incubation period is usually between 2 to 10 days. Person to person transmission does not occur.

All notified cases of this infection are followed up by interviewing the patient, or their family members, and conducting an environmental investigation to attempt to identify potential sources of infection. Water samples are taken from the homes of cases as well as from other locations identified as possible sources of infection.

Based on the investigations already conducted, there is no evidence of a single source of infection for the South Australian cases identified in the last 2 months.

Doctors are asked to consider *Legionella* infection as a diagnosis in persons presenting with a febrile lower respiratory illnesses, especially if they are immunocompromised or have other risk factors. Diagnosis can be made by serology, urinary antigen test or culture (best from bronchial washings or bronchoalveolar lavage, less satisfactory from sputum and blood).

***Legionella pneumophila* infection is a Notifiable Disease and doctors are requested to urgently notify the CDCB of any cases on 8226 7177 (24 hours/ 7 days).**

Dr Ann Koehler - Director, Communicable Disease Control Branch

Information contained within this advice should be treated as confidential and is for the intended recipient only.

PUBLIC HEALTH ALERT