

LEGIONELLA FACT SHEET: TOURIST ACCOMMODATIONS

What is *Legionella*?

- *Legionella* are bacteria that can cause a serious form of pneumonia (lung infection) called Legionnaire's Disease.
- Most people become infected with *Legionella* when they inhale water droplets that contain the bacteria.
- *Legionella* is found naturally in warm water and can thrive in places like hot tubs, cooling towers, drinking water, decorative fountains and hot water tanks.
- In tourist accommodations, people can become infected by inhaling water droplets or mist created by showerheads, sinks, cooling towers, or decorative fountains. Ice machines can also be a reservoir.

Why is it important to prevent *Legionella*?

- Legionnaire's disease is a dangerous and sometimes fatal infection.
- High risk groups for *Legionella* infections include:
 - Individuals over the age of 50
 - Current and former smokers
 - Individuals with conditions that weaken their immune system
- *Legionella* is on the rise in Georgia, with 189 cases in 2018 compared to 69 in 2013 and 43 in 2008.
- In Georgia during 2018, 99% of reported individuals with *Legionella* infections were hospitalized, and 4% died.

What you can do to stop the spread of *Legionella*?

- Two or more *Legionella* cases associated with the same facility will trigger a public health investigation which will require an environmental assessment and water testing.
- The Georgia Department of Public Health highly recommends that all tourist accommodations create and regularly update a water management program to limit *Legionella* and other germs from growing and spreading.
 - The CDC has an online tool that can be found here:
www.cdc.gov/legionella/WMPtoolkit.html
- Make sure that shower heads, sinks, ice machines, fountains and cooling towers are regularly cleaned and maintained to remove any biofilm, scale buildup, or organic debris or corrosion.
- If your facility includes a pool or hot tub, please see our Pool and Hot Tub fact sheets for specific advice.



Georgia Department of Public Health