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*From the Office of the  
Medical Health Officer*  
September 4, 2020

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## **Cluster of Cases of Legionnaires' disease in New Westminster**

Fraser Health Public Health has detected a cluster of cases of Legionnaires' disease in New Westminster. Public Health officials are investigating the source of the bacteria.

Legionnaires' disease is caused by a bacterium called Legionella. Legionella is commonly found in the environment, particularly in freshwater, groundwater, and soil. The bacterium can grow and spread in human-made building water systems like cooling towers, hot tubs that aren't drained after each use, decorative fountains, and large plumbing systems.

People can get Legionnaires' disease when they breathe in small droplets of water in the air that contain the bacterium. Most healthy people do not get Legionnaires' disease from being exposed to Legionella. However, people who are elderly, smokers, people with chronic lung conditions, and who are immunocompromised are at higher risk of getting sick. They can develop pneumonia and symptoms like fever, shortness of breath, severe fatigue, abdominal pain, and diarrhea.

Public Health is advising anyone who has developed pneumonia-like symptoms with a high-risk condition (e.g., chronic lung conditions, smokers, elderly, immunocompromised) to seek medical attention. If they have been in New Westminster within 19 days prior to symptom onset, they should also mention this to their doctor for testing, advice, and treatment.

For more information on Legionnaires' disease, please see the following HealthLink BC file:  
<https://www.healthlinkbc.ca/health-topics/ug2994>

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***The Fraser Health Medical Health Officers are available for medical consultations at  
604-587-3828 or 1-877-342-6467 (M-F, 0830-1630 hrs) or after hours at 604-527-4806.***

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