



# How to cope with legionnaires' disease

# The illness and its consequences

## What is the illness?

The illness is caused by the so-called 'Legionella' bacteria and exists in different forms. The light form of the infection is known as 'Legionella Flu', also called the 'Pontiac Fever'. The heavy form, known as Legionnaires' disease, is very hard to cure.

## Where can the legionella bacteria be found?

The bacteria lives in the ground and in water piping, but in such small quantities that it is not harmful to humans. Problems arise when water is heated between 25 and 55 degrees centigrade.

At these temperatures, the bacteria can multiply explosively, especially when the water is stagnant.

## How can I become infected?

You can only be infected by inhaling water vapour that contains the bacteria. The infection is not passed between people.

## What are the symptoms of the legionnaires' disease?

The bacteria needs 2 to 12 days to develop. Signals of infection are: rapidly developing headaches, muscle cramps, fever, coughing, fatigue, generally feeling ill and confusion.

## How can the disease be cured?

The Legionnaires' disease can be cured quite easily if your family doctor prescribes the right antibiotics.

The quicker, the better. However it could take quite a long time to recover completely.



*legionella bacteria*



## **Practical tips against infection**

The chance of infection can be decreased by taking the following steps: Be sure to use these tips!

### **Tips at home**

- Make sure the temperature of your hot water boiler is set to heat water to at least 60 degrees centigrade. This will kill the bacteria.
- When you have been away for some weeks, flush your water piping with cold or very hot water. Make sure that no water vapour is produced and there is sufficient ventilation.
- Solar systems should be equipped with a heater which keeps the temperature of water above 60 degrees centigrade. Of course, the entire system should be installed and regulated properly.
- If your humidifier uses vapour, there is a high risk. Filling it immediately before needed and using just boiled water will lower that risk.
- Make sure you drain your garden hose after use. Standing water is a major source of bacteria.
- If you own a “Jacuzzi” type bath which you have not used for some time, fill the tub with water of at least 60 degrees centigrade. Turn on the bath and drain it after approximately ten minutes.  
You could also clean it with special swimming pool cleansers.
- Coffee machines, Steam irons, hot tubs, water pistols and your car’s air conditioning are not dangerous.
- If you have any doubts about the safety of your hot water systems, do not hesitate to inform your water company.

### **Tips on vacation**

- The risk of being infected by the Legionella bacteria is much greater in warm countries.  
Make sure you check for possible hazardous situations!



For more information about legionnaires' disease and the activities of the foundation, please visit our website:  
***[www.stichtingveteranenziekte.nl](http://www.stichtingveteranenziekte.nl)***

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