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Health information available for residents about *Legionella* in warmer months

LANSING, Mich. – As Legionnaires' disease is more common during the warmer months when temperatures are ideal for growth of the bacteria that cause the disease (*Legionella*), the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services, Genesee County Health Department, and Wayne State University are releasing information for Flint residents about what they can do to protect themselves.

“We continue to work with our partners in Flint to ensure residents have access to the health information and services that they need, including resources related to *Legionella*,” said Nick Lyon, director of the MDHHS. “The questions provided by our local partners, and answers from our experts at the state and university level, are important guides for residents in the warmer months.”

MDHHS, GCHD and WSU worked together to answer common questions that Flint residents have regarding *Legionella*, with assistance from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. While this information was compiled to address the questions of Flint residents, the guidance could apply to all residents statewide.

“It is important that our residents know the signs and symptoms of Legionnaires' disease and that they seek medical attention right away if they become ill,” said Mark Valacak, GCHD Health Officer.

Legionella is a type of bacteria commonly found in the environment that grows best in warm water, such as hot tubs, cooling towers, hot water tanks, drinkable water systems, and decorative fountains. When people are exposed to the bacteria, it can cause Legionnaires' disease, a respiratory disease that can infect the lungs and cause pneumonia. In general, Legionnaires' disease is not spread from one person to another. However, this has been documented in extremely rare cases.

“We have worked hard to coordinate the various local, state, and national groups involved in the effort to understand and manage the concerns about Legionnaires disease in Flint,” said Dr. Matthew Seeger, a Wayne State expert in crisis communication. “Cooperation is critical to ensuring the best information is delivered in a timely manner.”

Most healthy people do not get sick after being exposed to *Legionella*. Being 50 years or older or having certain risk factors increases the chances of getting sick. Other risk factors include being a

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current or former smoker; having chronic lung disease, such as emphysema or chronic obstructive pulmonary disease; having a weakened immune system from diseases like cancer, diabetes, or kidney failure; or taking medicine that weakens your immune system. Legionnaires' disease in children is not common.

To prepare for the warmer months, MDHHS and GCHD have been working with buildings with large water systems such as hospitals and nursing homes, hotels and motels, and buildings with more than 10 stories to help protect people from Legionnaires' disease.

For any resident that develops pneumonia symptoms, you should see a doctor right away. Signs and symptoms of pneumonia can include cough, shortness of breath, muscle aches, headache, and high fever. Be sure to tell the doctor if you have used a hot tub, spent any nights away from home, or stayed in a hospital in the last two weeks. Legionnaires' disease requires treatment with antibiotics, and most patients can be treated successfully.

To view the *Legionella* guidance for residents, [click here](#). For more information about Legionnaires' disease, visit www.cdc.gov/legionella.

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