Legionnaires’ Disease

What is Legionnaires’ disease?

▪ Legionnaires’ disease is a lung infection caused by the bacteria *Legionella pneumophila*.
▪ The bacteria is found in water.
▪ Legionnaires’ disease was named for the first recognized outbreak at a 1976 convention of the American Legion in Philadelphia.

What are the symptoms?

▪ Symptoms include:
  ▪ muscle aches
  ▪ headache
  ▪ fatigue
  ▪ loss of appetite
  ▪ and coughing
▪ These symptoms are followed by high fever (102-105°F), pneumonia, and occasionally abdominal pain and diarrhea.

How is it spread?

▪ Legionnaires’ disease is spread by water droplets in the air that contain *Legionella* bacteria.
▪ People can get sick if they breathe in water droplets that contain the bacteria.
▪ Persons can be exposed to these water droplets in their homes, at work, in hospitals, or in other public places.
▪ *Legionella* organisms are found in many types of water systems and reproduce in high numbers in warm water (95-115°F), such as certain plumbing systems, hot water tanks, cooling towers, large air conditioning systems, and hot tubs.
▪ Legionnaires’ disease is not spread from person to person.

Who is at risk?

▪ Legionnaires’ disease occurs worldwide, especially in persons over 50 years of age.
▪ Other risk factors include smoking; male gender; chronic lung disease; suppressed or weakened immune system due to organ transplant, cancer, kidney disease, or AIDS.

How is it diagnosed?

▪ Diagnosis of Legionnaires’ disease requires testing for *Legionella* bacteria. This is not often done when someone goes to a clinic or hospital with fever and pneumonia.
  ▪ As a result, Legionnaires’ disease often goes undiagnosed.
  ▪ A urine test is the most common type of test used to diagnose Legionnaires’ disease.

How is it treated?

▪ Most cases can be successfully treated with antibiotics.
▪ However, about 1 out of every 10 people who get sick with Legionnaires’ disease will die.