

# Chief Health Officer Alert

14 January 2011

Status: Active

## Legionnaires' disease cluster associated with travellers to Bali

The Department of Health has been notified of four cases of Legionnaires' disease in recently returned travellers from Bali.

In addition, Western Australia has been notified of six cases. The onsets of the cases have ranged from 10 August to 1 January. Five of the ten cases have had their onsets since mid-December.

All of the cases have stayed in Kuta, Bali.

### Information for health professionals

Legionnaires' disease should be considered in any returned traveller from this area presenting with influenza-like symptoms such as headache, fever, rigors, cough or myalgia, and particularly those with atypical pneumonia. Rapid confirmation of the diagnosis of *Legionella pneumophila* serogroup 1 can be obtained by urinary antigen testing. (All of these cases have been due to *Legionella pneumophila* serogroup 1). Sputum for culture should be sought in all cases if possible.

A four-fold rise in titre between acute and convalescent sera is also diagnostic, however, this may take two to four weeks to develop.

Legionnaires' disease is a Group A notifiable condition which requires immediate notification to the Department by telephone on initial diagnosis (presumptive or confirmed) with written notification to follow within five days.

For further information or to notify a case please contact the Communicable Disease Prevention and Control Unit at the Department of Health on 1300 651 160 (business hours) or 1300 790 733 (after hours) or go to our website:

<http://www.health.vic.gov.au/ideas/bluebook/legionellosis>

### Information for the general public

Legionnaires' disease is an infection of the lungs (pneumonia) caused by bacteria of the *Legionella* family. Infection occurs when a person breathes in bacteria that are commonly found in the environment.

Legionnaires' disease usually causes fever, chills, a cough and shortness of breath. Some people also have muscle aches, headache, tiredness, loss of appetite and diarrhoea. People can become very sick with pneumonia; most people recover but the disease is occasionally fatal. People most at risk of Legionnaires' disease are those over 50 years of age, smokers, and anyone whose immune system is suppressed by medications or diseases such as cancer, kidney failure or diabetes.

Legionnaires' disease can occur after a person breathes in the bacteria in contaminated water droplets. *Legionella* bacteria can contaminate air conditioning cooling towers, whirlpool spas, shower heads and other bodies of water.

Legionnaires' disease is not spread from person to person. The time between a person's exposure to the bacteria and becoming sick is usually between two to ten days.

If you have any of the symptoms described above and have recently returned from Bali, please see your doctor and mention your travel history,



Dr John Carnie  
Chief Health Officer