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PUBLIC HEALTH ADVISORY

To: Health Care Providers
From: Sara Robinson, MPH, Infectious Disease Epidemiology Program Director
Subject: Cluster of Legionellosis Cases - Greater Bangor Area
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Cluster of Legionellosis Cases – Greater Bangor Area

Summary:

In the greater Bangor area, Penobscot County, Maine, physicians have reported 4 confirmed cases of legionellosis from July 1, 2021 to July 31, 2021, 3 of which required intubation. Cases range in age from 38 to 67 years old. Maine CDC has not identified a common exposure among cases.

Background:

Legionellosis is an infectious disease caused by a gram-negative bacillus of the genus *Legionella*, most commonly *Legionella pneumophila*. Legionnaires' disease is the acute pneumonic form of the disease. Pontiac fever is a non-pneumonic form of legionellosis that is less severe than Legionnaires' disease. Legionellosis is generally acquired by inhalation of an infectious dose of aerosolized *Legionella*, usually in contaminated water from sources such as cooling towers, whirlpool spas, showers, and faucets.

Symptoms of Legionnaires' disease are similar to other forms of pneumonia and usually occur 2-14 days after exposure to an environmental source. High fever, chills, cough, chest pain and muscle aches are common symptoms. Legionellosis is diagnosed through laboratory tests, most commonly the urine antigen test or culture of respiratory specimens (sputum or bronchoalveolar lavage). Legionnaires' disease commonly results in hospitalization, and the fatality rate is 5-30%.

Recommendations:

Providers should be aware of the increase in legionellosis cases and consider legionellosis in the differential diagnosis of pneumonia cases.

Epidemiologic risk factors for legionellosis include:

- Recent travel with an overnight stay outside the home
- Exposure to whirlpool spas
- Recent repairs or maintenance work on domestic plumbing
- Renal or hepatic failure
- Diabetes
- Systemic malignancy
- Smoking
- Immune system disorders.

Reporting requirements:

- Legionellosis is notifiable in Maine. All suspect cases of legionellosis should be reported by phone to 1-800-821-5821 or by fax to 1-800-293-7534.

For more information:

- Maine CDC's legionella webpage: <https://www.maine.gov/dhhs/legionella>
- Federal CDC's legionella webpage: <https://www.cdc.gov/legionella/index.html>