

Increase in Legionnaires' Disease in the City of Barrie – Now Concluded

Attention: Physicians, Emergency Departments, Infection Control Practitioners, Walk-In Clinics/Urgent Care Clinics, Nurse Practitioners, NSM LHIN, Central LHIN

Date: January 23, 2020

The investigation into an increase of Legionellosis cases in the City of Barrie which began November 28th, 2019, has now concluded. There were five confirmed cases of Legionellosis associated with the investigation. **No new cases have been reported related to this investigation since December 18th, 2019** and we do not anticipate any further spread.

Despite an intensive investigation, SMDHU has been unable to determine the source or sources of the bacteria and none of the cooling towers that were investigated, within a wide radius, were found to be the source of infection. This is not unusual in Legionnaires' disease investigations as finding a common environmental source of the bacteria is known to be a difficult and complicated task.

The Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit (SMDU) began its investigation into the cases because it is atypical to see this number of cases at this time of year. The health unit usually sees an average of two cases of Legionnaires' disease in Barrie residents every year with cases most commonly occurring in summer and fall.

While the bacteria is usually found in natural, freshwater environments, it can become a health concern in human-made water systems (e.g., plumbing systems of large buildings, cooling towers, certain medical devices, decorative fountains) where conditions allow it to multiply and come in contact with vulnerable persons. People contract *Legionella* by inhaling aerosolized water droplets containing the bacteria or, less commonly, by aspiration of contaminated drinking water. Fortunately, most people exposed to the bacteria do not become ill.

If you have any questions, please contact the Infectious Diseases Team at 705-721-7520 ext. 8809.

