

Duneland School Corporation

ADMINISTRATION CENTER / Superintendent's Office

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To: All Duneland Families and Staff
Fr: Superintendent's Office
Date: October 11, 2019 – 3:00 p.m.
Re: Legionnaires Disease

As previously released, a Duneland School Corporation (DSC) employee self-reported a positive test for Legionnaires disease. As a result, DSC closed both Chesterton Middle School and Westchester Intermediate School on Friday, October 4 upon receipt of elevated water testing results. Based on this information, a parent of a child who attends the YMCA Early Learning Academy (housed at Chesterton Middle School) who was having symptoms, had her child tested for Legionella Pneumophila on Monday, October 7, 2019. On October 10, 2019, DSC officials were notified that test results indicated a presumptive positive for the presence of Legionella Pneumophila, suggesting a current or past infection.

Legionellosis, or Legionnaires disease, is a type of pneumonia caused by *Legionella* bacteria. Legionnaires' disease is not contagious, and you cannot catch it from another person. The bacteria are common and grow in water. People often receive low-level exposure in the environment without getting sick. Legionellosis usually occurs only when someone who is already susceptible receives concentrated exposure to the bacteria. Persons who are heavy smokers, elderly, or whose ability to resist infection is reduced are more likely to contract Legionnaires' disease than healthy nonsmokers. According to the Centers for Disease Control in Atlanta, there are between 10,000 and 50,000 cases of Legionnaires disease every year in the U.S. We are cooperating fully with local health officials who are investigating this matter. Most cases of legionellosis are isolated and are not associated with an outbreak. To date, one confirmed case and one presumptive case of the disease have been reported.

To identify additional cases, absence records for the period of August 1, 2019 to October 10, 2019 will be reviewed. Students or employees who were absent for more than three consecutive days will be identified, and an attempt will be

made to determine if any in that group experienced pneumonia-like symptoms (fever, shortness of breath, cough). Those who used three or more consecutive days of leave during this period can expect to be contacted by a DSC representative for an interview. If you are the parent of a student who experienced a pneumonia-like illness in the past two months, but your student had fewer than three consecutive absences, contact your school to speak with your school's nurse to arrange an interview.

If you are a DSC employee who experienced a pneumonia-like illness in the past two months, but you had fewer than three consecutive absences, contact Human Resources Benefits Coordinator Beth Howard at: 219.983.3606 to arrange an interview.

To assure that you are being protected during the interim, a medical tracking program to identify any new or old cases will be instituted. Part of this tracking will be to ask you a few questions about you or your student's illness when you call in sick to your school attendance office or work supervisor. In addition, information on the DSC website will continue to be posted as it becomes available. For the present, please pay attention to the following important points:

WHAT YOU SHOULD DO NOW (in collaboration with the Porter County Health Department):

1. If you are not sick, there is no need for you to see a doctor.
2. If you are now sick with a cough and fever:
 - I. Seek medical attention.
 - II. Tell your medical practitioner that your student attends school, or you work in a school district where traces of legionella bacteria was found in the water.
 - III. If you see a physician, notify human resources so that your illness can be tracked.

If you have any concerns or questions, please contact your child's school nurse or, in the case of employees, contact DSC human resources. Your health and safety are of great concern to us. Please review the information below from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention on Legionnaires Disease.

As further information develops we will keep you informed via email and the district website.

LEGIONNAIRES' DISEASE

Legionnaires' (LEE-juh-nares) disease is a very serious type of pneumonia (lung infection) caused by bacteria called *Legionella*. If you develop pneumonia symptoms and may have been exposed to *Legionella*, see a doctor right away. Be sure to mention 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 Can Cause Pneumonia Symptoms

Signs and symptoms of Legionnaires' disease can include:

- ▶ Cough
- ▶ Muscle aches
- ▶ Fever
- ▶ Shortness of breath
- ▶ Headache

Doctors use chest x-rays or physical exams to check for pneumonia. Your doctor may also order tests on a sample of urine and sputum (phlegm) to see if your lung infection is caused by *Legionella*.

Legionnaires' Disease Is Serious, but Can Be Treated with Antibiotics

Legionnaires' disease is treated with antibiotics (drugs that kill bacteria in the body). Most people who get sick need care in a hospital but make a full recovery. However, about 1 out of 10 people who get Legionnaires' disease will die from the infection.

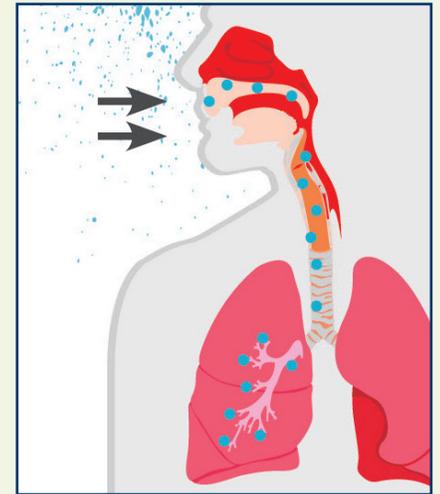
Certain People Are at Increased Risk for Legionnaires' Disease

Most healthy people do not get Legionnaires' disease after being exposed to *Legionella*. Being 50 years or older or having certain risk factors can increase your chances of getting sick. These risk factors include:

- ▶ Being a current or former smoker
- ▶ Having chronic lung disease, such as emphysema or chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD)
- ▶ Having a weakened immune system from diseases like cancer, diabetes, or kidney failure
- ▶ Taking medication that weakens your immune system

Legionella Are Usually Spread through Water Droplets in the Air

In nature, *Legionella* live in fresh water and rarely cause illness. In man-made settings, *Legionella* can grow if water is not properly maintained. These man-made water sources become a health problem when small droplets of water that contain the bacteria get into the air and people breathe them in. In rare cases, someone breathes in *Legionella* while they are drinking water and it "goes down the wrong pipe" into the lungs. In general, people do not spread Legionnaires' disease to other people.



Legionnaires' disease, a type of severe pneumonia, is caused by breathing in small droplets of water that contain *Legionella*.

Common Sources of Infection

Outbreaks of Legionnaires' disease are often associated with large or complex water systems, like those found in hospitals, hotels, and cruise ships.

The most likely sources of infection include:



Water used for showering (potable water)



Cooling towers (parts of large air conditioning systems)



Decorative fountains



Hot tubs