



NC DEPARTMENT OF
**HEALTH AND
HUMAN SERVICES**

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To: All North Carolina Clinicians
From: Erica Wilson, MD, MPH, Medical Epidemiologist
Subject: Increase in Legionnaires' Disease Cases
Date: June 9, 2025

The North Carolina Division of Public Health is making clinicians aware of an increase in cases of Legionnaires' disease during April and May. The increase has been detected across a broad geographic area and has not been linked to a single source or exposure; however, multiple cluster investigations are ongoing.

Legionnaires' disease is caused by inhalation of aerosolized water or mist containing *Legionella* bacterium. *Legionella* occurs naturally in the environment, however most cases occur when the bacteria grows and spreads in human-made water systems. Clinicians should be aware of the increase in cases of Legionnaires' disease and follow these recommendations:

- Consider testing for Legionnaires' disease in cases of community-acquired pneumonia, especially those residing in high-risk settings such as long term care facilities where cluster detection is critical.
- [The preferred diagnostic tests](#) for Legionnaires' disease are *Legionella* urinary antigen test **AND** paired culture of lower respiratory specimens. Cultures are beneficial for two reasons:
 - Urinary antigen tests only detect *Legionella pneumophila* serogroup 1 infections.
 - Culture is critical in establishing links in clusters and outbreaks.
- Please submit specimens to the North Carolina State Laboratory of Public Health (NCSLPH) for cluster investigation and linkage to environmental samples. NCSLPH accepts:
 - Clinical specimens include sputum, pleural fluid, lung biopsy tissue, bronchial washings and lavages, and tracheal aspirates for culture and DFA.
 - Isolates for further characterization.
 - Additional information about submission criteria and shipping can be found on pages 152-153 of the [NCSLPH SCOPE: A Guide to Laboratory Services](#).

For questions on reporting and investigation of Legionnaires' diseases cases, please contact the Communicable Disease on-call line at 919-733-3419.

For additional resources:

- [Clinical Guidance for Legionella Infections](#)
- [Factsheets for Healthcare providers](#)

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