



Allegheny Valley School District
300 Pearl Avenue, Cheswick, PA 15024

Dear Parents and Guardians:

Yesterday, the District received the results from legionella water testing that was completed due to surrounding school districts having problems with their water supply. Tests were completed in both the Acmetonia Elementary School and Springdale Jr-Sr High School. The water tests found elevated levels of legionella in the water at various sink locations in both schools. Legionella is a type of bacterium found naturally in freshwater environments and can grow when buildings are dormant for an extended period of time.

With the information in hand, AGX (the testing company) was immediately called to clarify the results, determine corrective action, and, most importantly, identify any dangers to our students, staff, or visitors. Following my conversation with AGX, I reached out to the Allegheny County Health Department and had a detailed conversation with Dr. Kristen Mertz, who provided the following guidance:

- The discovery of legionella is not an emergency; schools are a low-risk population and no illnesses have been reported.
- Legionella infects through inhaling water droplets, such as steam from showers or hot tubs.
- The District does not need to close the buildings, but should put remedial actions in place.
- Hand washing can still occur in affected areas.

Therefore, the following actions have been taken:

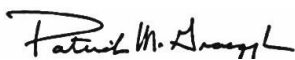
- All sinks where positives have been identified will be remediated by super-heating the fixtures/sinks. (The water temperature will be increased to greater than 160°F and every outlet flushed for a minimum of 30 minutes. This measure must be taken when no one is in the buildings due to the high temperature of the water.)
- If any aerators are present, they will be removed, cleaned, and disinfected.
- Students and staff have been advised to drink bottled water, which will be provided by the school district until further notice.
- Water fountains have been shut down due to an abundance of caution.
- A follow-up sampling will take place 24-48 hours after remediation. [Scheduling must take place in conjunction with AGX and completion of remediation methods.]

Legionella is contracted by inhaling water, so there is minimal risk to students and staff. Additionally, children in the United States rarely contract legionnaires' disease, and the District has not received reports of any cases. We will continue to work closely with and follow the guidance of the Allegheny County Health Department and the testing experts. Additional mitigation measures may also be implemented. Test results will be posted on the District's web site to provide additional information.

The health and safety of our students and staff remains our highest priority. Our students and employees will continue to have water provided to them until this issue is resolved; they may also bring water from home. Attached to this letter is information from the Allegheny County Health Department that should answer questions and concerns you may have. If you should have additional concerns, please contact your child's building administrator or nurse.

We will continue to keep you apprised of any future testing and/or changes due to this matter. We thank you for your patience and support as we continue to work with local experts to resolve this issue.

Sincerely,



Patrick M. Graczyk, Ed.D.
Superintendent

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

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.

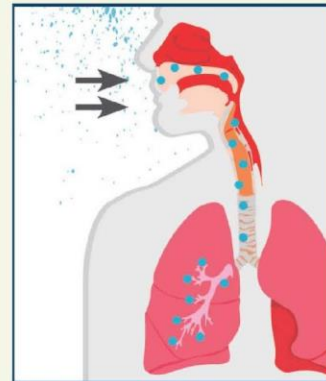
Certain People Are at Increased Risk for Legionnaires' Disease

Most healthy people do not get Legionnaires' disease after being exposed to *Legionella*. Being 80 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