

Facts about bacteria found in Iowa City VA Medical Center water system

- Citing routine testing and mitigation steps, experts at the Iowa City VA Medical Center have found virtually no risk to patients, visitors, or employees.
- The Iowa City VA Health Care System tests for *Legionella* on a monthly basis - a higher standard than the quarterly requirement set by VA, and far more proactive than CDC suggestions to test only in cases of a disease outbreak.
- NO cases of Legionnaires' disease, a form of pneumonia, have been reported at the Iowa City VA Medical Center.
- The main water system at the Iowa City VA Medical Center has NEVER been compromised with *Legionella*.
- Positive test results have been in low amounts and in isolated locations---an individual sink or shower, for example.
- In response to those areas where positive test results were found, the Iowa City VA Medical Center underwent the following actions:
 - Point-of-use filter installation on impacted shower heads and sinks; which prevents *Legionella* bacteria from getting through.
 - Pipe and fixture replacements to increase water flow (including closing a patient room temporarily for upgrades).
 - Water filtration system installation to flush and cleanse the entire water supply, despite only detecting small bacterial presences in isolated locations.
- Additionally, patient care areas with the highest susceptibility to infection operate on a separate water system; which is super-heated to eliminate contaminants then reduced in temperature using point-of-use anti-scald devices.
- Additional plumbing upgrades are planned, in the coming years, to further decrease the ability for *Legionella* to colonize (approximately \$6.5 million in renovations).
- We will continue to routinely sample the water and take appropriate actions as required.

General facts about *Legionella*

- *Legionella* is a common environmental bacteria. It can be found in natural, freshwater environments, but it is generally present in insufficient numbers to cause disease. Potable (drinking) water systems, whirlpool spas, and cooling towers provide the two main conditions needed for *Legionella* colonization, heat and stasis (stagnant conditions). Therefore, these are common sources of water colonization.
- About 50 percent of the strains of *Legionella* bacteria are capable of causing Legionnaires' disease.
- Most people with Legionnaires' disease will have pneumonia (lung infection) since the *Legionella* bacteria grow and thrive in the lungs.

- People get Legionnaires' disease either when they breathe in mist or vapor containing *Legionella* bacteria or when a large enough amount of the bacteria is consumed. *Legionella* bacteria are NOT spread from one person to another person.
- Detecting *Legionella* in water when at low levels and eliminating it at that point is the key to preventing infection. The goal of a testing and mitigation program is to prevent heavy colonization of a water supply that would pose a risk to individuals.
- Most people exposed to the bacteria do not become ill.
- More About *Legionella* can be found on the CDC website, the source the general information above: <http://www.cdc.gov/legionella/fastfacts.html>

