

## FACT SHEET

### For Health Professionals

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## PONTIAC FEVER

### What is Pontiac fever?

Pontiac fever is a mild disease recognized as a distinctly different clinical and epidemiological form of legionnaire's disease. The clinical symptoms occur after exposure to *Legionella*, but represent a reaction to inhaled antigen rather than bacterial invasion.

### What are the symptoms of Pontiac Fever?

Persons with Pontiac fever experience fever and muscle aches and do not get pneumonia. They generally recover in 2 - 5 days without treatment. The time between exposure and onset of Pontiac fever is shorter, generally a few hours to 2 days.

### How is Pontiac Fever spread?

Outbreaks of Pontiac fever have occurred after persons have inhaled aerosols from a water source (e.g., air conditioning cooling towers, whirlpool spas, showers) contaminated with *Legionella* bacteria. Persons may be exposed to these aerosols in homes, workplaces, hospitals, or public places.

### Who gets Pontiac fever?

Pontiac fever most commonly occurs in persons who are otherwise healthy.

### How is Pontiac fever diagnosed?

The diagnosis of Pontiac fever requires tests not routinely performed on persons with fever or pneumonia. Diagnosis depends upon isolation of the causative organism on special media, its demonstration by direct (immunofluorescent) IF stain of involved tissue or respiratory secretions, detection of antigens of *Legionella pneumophila* serogroup 1 in urine by radioimmunoassay (RIA), or by a fourfold or greater rise in immunofluorescent antibody test (IFA) titer between an acute phase serum and one drawn 3 - 6 weeks later.

### How long is a person infectious?

Pontiac fever is not spread person to person.

### What is the treatment for Pontiac fever?

Pontiac fever requires no specific treatment.

### Do infected people need to be excluded from school, work, or child care?

No.

### Where is the *Legionella* bacterium found?

*Legionella* organisms can be found in many types of water systems. The bacteria reproduce to high numbers in warm, motionless water (95-115° F), such as that found in certain plumbing systems and hot water tanks, cooling towers and evaporative condensers of large air-conditioning systems, and whirlpool spas.

### What can be done to help prevent the spread of Pontiac fever?

Improved design and maintenance of cooling towers and plumbing systems limit the growth and aerosolization of *Legionella* organisms are the foundations of Pontiac fever prevention. During outbreaks, health department investigators seek to identify the source of disease transmission and recommend appropriate prevention and control measures, such as decontamination of the water source.