

25 November, 2020

LEGIONELLA ALERT - HURSTVILLE AREA

South Eastern Sydney Local Health District is advising people who have been in the Hurstville area in the past month to be on the lookout for symptoms of Legionnaires' disease.

The Public Health Unit launched an investigation into cooling towers in the area to check for *Legionella*, the bacteria that causes Legionnaire's disease, following the notification of two cases of Legionnaires' disease this month.

Both cases spent time in or near the Hurstville town centre during the time period.

South Eastern Sydney Local Health District Acting Director of Public Health, Dr Vicky Sheppard, said symptoms can develop up to 10 days from the time of exposure to contaminated water particles in the air and include fever, chills, a cough and shortness of breath and may lead to severe chest infections such as pneumonia.

"People who develop this disease are diagnosed by chest X-ray and a urine test and usually require antibiotic treatment in hospital," Dr Sheppard said.

Public Health Units in local health districts across NSW follow up every case of Legionnaires' disease and work closely with local councils in the management of cooling towers. Routine testing of cooling towers helps identify contamination early and allows for prompt cleaning and corrective actions.

In 2018 NSW Health strengthened the Public Health Regulation to reduce the community's risk of Legionnaires' disease, requiring building owners to conduct risk assessments and monthly tests on cooling towers and notify high levels of *Legionella* and other bacteria to local councils.

Legionnaires' disease cannot be spread from person to person. Outbreaks of the disease are most frequently linked to contaminated water cooling systems of air conditioning plants in large buildings.

For more information about water cooling systems management contact your local Public Health Unit on 1300 066 055 or

<https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/environment/legionellacontrol/Pages/default.aspx>

For more information on Legionnaires' disease visit:

https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/factsheets/Pages/legionnaires_disease.aspx