

COUNTY OF



ALLEGHENY

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Updated Guidelines Issued for Control of *Legionella* Bacteria

PITTSBURGH – The Allegheny County Health Department and the Pittsburgh Regional Health Initiative have issued updated guidelines for the control of *Legionella* bacteria in western Pennsylvania.

“The scientific community has gained more experience with *Legionella* since the guidelines were last revised in 1997, and most experts agree that more scientific evidence is now available on which to base definitive recommendations, especially related to *Legionella* control,” said Health Director Dr. Karen Hacker.

The Health Department and the Pittsburgh Regional Health Initiative used a grant from the Jewish Healthcare Foundation to retain the RAND Corporation to facilitate the process of updating the guidelines and consulting with experts representing a broad range of organizations and disciplines.

“Over the last 17 years, the Pittsburgh Regional Health Initiative has worked on reducing many infections, from CLABSI to CAUTI to CDiff,” said Karen Wolk Feinstein, PhD, president and CEO of the Pittsburgh Regional Health Initiative. “But when we were asked to lead an effort to reduce *Legionella*, we had a lot to learn. Among our discoveries was the reality that the guidelines for dealing with this tricky bacterium were outdated and that solutions to an outbreak of infection were not simple.”

Information about *Legionella* was drawn from numerous local, state, federal and international organizations, including ACHD, the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Veteran’s Health Administration, the World Health Organization and various countries that have issued *Legionella* control guidelines.

The purpose of the guidelines is to provide interested persons and organizations – especially community hospitals, nursing homes, assisted living centers and high-rise retirement facilities – with updated information on *Legionella* and how to minimize its occurrence and impact on people and the environment.

Legionella bacteria are sometimes found in water systems and can cause Legionnaires’ Disease, a type of pneumonia. People can get Legionnaires’ Disease when they breathe in a mist or vapor containing the bacteria. Older people, current or former smokers, those with chronic lung disease and people with a weak immune system are at a higher risk of getting sick. The bacteria are not spread person to person.

Link to updated guidelines:

http://www.achd.net/infectd/pubs/pdf/2014_FINAL_Legionella_Guidelines_for_Western_PA.pdf

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