



## Call for Enhanced Surveillance and Testing for Legionellosis in Morris County

Date: July 1, 2019

**Public Health Message Type:**  Alert  Advisory  Update  Information

**Intended Audience:**  All public health partners  Healthcare providers  Infection preventionists  
 Local health departments  Schools/child care centers  ACOs  
 Animal health professionals  Other:

### Key Points or Updates:

- The New Jersey Department of Health (NJDOH) is seeing an increased number of Legionnaires' disease cases being reported in Morris County, New Jersey.
- Healthcare providers are being asked to have a high index of suspicion for *Legionella* when evaluating patients for community-acquired and healthcare-associated pneumonia.
- **Diagnostic testing for Legionnaires' disease should include the urinary antigen test AND the collection of respiratory specimens for possible testing by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).**
- All suspected or confirmed cases of legionellosis (Legionnaires' disease and Pontiac fever) should be promptly reported to the local health department where the patient resides. If the patient residence is unknown, report to your own local health department. Contact information is available at: [localhealth.nj.gov](http://localhealth.nj.gov)
- NJDOH is requesting that public health officials report to NJDOH cases of Legionnaires' disease in persons with a **history of travel to the Morris County area** of New Jersey during their 14-day incubation period and with illness onset since May 1, 2019 to present.

### INFORMATION FOR HEALTHCARE PROVIDERS, FACILITIES, AND CLINICAL LABORATORIES

Healthcare providers should consider the diagnosis of Legionnaires' disease in patients presenting with clinical features of pneumonia, fever, and cough. NJDOH requests that respiratory specimens (sputum, bronchoalveolar lavage, tracheal aspirate, or lung tissue) be collected and held for patients who tested positive for *Legionella* by a urinary antigen test and who reside/work in or visited Morris County.

- These respiratory specimens should ideally be obtained prior to antibiotic administration, but necessary antibiotic treatment should not be delayed for specimen collection, and culture can be attempted even after antibiotic therapy has been initiated.
- Respiratory specimens should be frozen immediately after collection.
- Please inform your laboratory to not reject respiratory specimens based on specimen quality (e.g., due to lack of white blood cells in the sample, contamination with other bacteria).

**After further public health investigation, NJDOH may request that these specimens be sent to the CDC for *Legionella* culture and molecular testing free-of-charge.**