



## Legionella found in Calgary hospital's water

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CALGARY - Officials at Rockyview General Hospital in Calgary are providing bottled water to patients after legionella bacteria were found in the hospital's water supply.

Alberta's provincial laboratory detected low counts of the organism in water tested from four taps at the hospital's intensive care unit, health region officials confirmed at a news conference Tuesday.

Legionella bacteria can cause legionnaires' disease, which usually occurs as a single, isolated case. It can be spread when people breathe mists that come from a water source contaminated with the bacteria, such as a shower or air conditioning.

Tests were ordered at the Calgary hospital after traces of legionella were discovered in the blood of one elderly patient. She was suspected of having pneumonia, and died of heart failure in the second week of December.

The Alberta health region's Dr. Tom Louie said "it is possible" that legionella bacteria caused the woman's pneumonia.

In an attempt to eradicate the problem, Louie said the hospital's maintenance department will be superheating the water supply at night, because the organism does not survive at high temperatures. In the meantime, drinking water and water used for mouth care will be sterilized in advance, and no ice cubes made from tap water will be given to patients in the intensive care unit.

He said transplant patients in particular would be at risk from exposure to legionella, and there are few of them at Rockyview General.

Legionnaires' disease usually hits people who are middle-aged or older, especially those already ill with something else. Symptoms include fever and chills. Those with legionnaires' disease often have pneumonia.

The Atlanta-based Centers for Disease Control say between five per cent and 30 per cent of those who get the disease die.

Written by CBC News Online [staff](#)

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