
www.legionellatesting.com

What is *Legionella*?

The *Legionella* organism is a gram negative, rod shaped bacterium that can cause pneumonia (Legionnaires' Disease) or a flu like illness (Pontiac fever). It was first identified and recognized as causing disease during the outbreak that occurred in conjunction with the American Legion Convention in Philadelphia in 1976. There are over 40 species of *Legionella* and 18 of those can cause disease. It is estimated that the species *Legionella pneumophila* causes most of the infections.

Legionella is a fastidious organism, meaning it has specific growth requirements that need to be met in order for it to survive and grow. Some of these growth requirements are:

1. Temperature above 68° F
2. Iron
3. L Cysteine
4. Biofilm (particularly protozoans)

Unlike some other bacteria, it can survive at lower dissolved oxygen levels and is somewhat resistant to chlorine disinfection. Particular copper and silver ion concentrations can kill the bacterium. Certain plastics and organics can provide nutrients for growth. These attributes make our modern day plumbing systems a good habitat for the organism.