

LEGIONELLOSIS, HOTEL - MEXICO: (QUINTANA ROO), ALERT

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A ProMED-mail post <<http://www.promedmail.org>>

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The Mexican island of Cozumel, in the Caribbean and just a ferry ride from Playa del Carmen, has reported an outbreak of Legionnaires' disease at 2 popular hotel properties. Travelers were alerted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, which is based in Atlanta. The CDC says that the outbreak is confined to just 2 resorts, the Regency Club Vacation Resort, which is a timeshare property, and the Wyndham Cozumel Resort and Spa (formerly the Reef Club Cozumel).

Cancellation fees for current and future guests have been suspended at the Wyndham. Since May of 2008, there have been 9 cases of Legionnaires' disease confirmed among U.S. and Dutch visitors to the resorts. The most recent case was in October of last year [2010], so the outbreak has continued on and off for more than 2 years.

A statement from Wyndham's management said the water systems at the resort had been disinfected and have also been "monitored and approved by state and federal government health authorities in Mexico."

Cozumel has long been a favorite of Minnesota tourists and is less than 4 hours away, non-stop, from the Minneapolis/St. Paul International Airport via both Delta and Sun Country airlines. It is a more traditional Mexican destination and far different from its lively, non-stop action neighbors to the west, Cancun and Riviera Maya. Cozumel has long been a favorite diving destination for visitors from around the globe.

A form of pneumonia, Legionnaires' disease is transmitted by the inhalation of bacteria-contaminated water. Hot tubs, cooling towers, spray misters, shower heads and faucets are a common source of the bacterium. It is not transmitted between people. The disease was named during an outbreak at an American Legion convention in Philadelphia in 1976.

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[Legionellosis is an infectious disease caused by a Gram-negative bacillus of the genus Legionella, most commonly Legionella pneumophila. Legionnaires' disease is the acute pneumonic form of the disease; about 70 per cent of cases are due to L. pneumophila serogroup 1. Pontiac fever is a non-pneumonic form of legionellosis that is less severe than Legionnaires' disease. Pontiac fever takes its name from an outbreak in 1968 in Pontiac, Michigan, USA. Risk factors for Legionnaires' disease include age over 50 years, cigarette smoking, diabetes, chronic heart or lung disease, and immunosuppression.

Legionnaires' disease, and possibly Pontiac fever, is usually acquired by inhalation by a susceptible person of an infectious dose of aerosolized *Legionella*. Usually, a building's contaminated water system is incriminated as the source. *Legionella* are found primarily in the hot water portion of plumbing systems and in cooling towers. Water temperatures of 25-40 C (77-104 F) support the highest concentrations of the organism in water storage tanks of plumbing systems. Aerosolization of the contaminated warm water can occur in showers, spa pools, sprays in groceries, fountains, and cooling towers. Elimination or reduction of legionella colonization in a hot water system is difficult. For a discussion, please see <<http://www.dhmh.state.md.us/html/legionella.htm>>.

Genotyping of patient and environmental isolates has become a helpful tool to establish transmission pathways. The predominance of one genotype in patient specimens suggests transmission from a common source. Because *L. pneumophila* may be found in water supplies without linkage to any cases of legionellosis, the actual causative infectious reservoir should be demonstrated by means of genotyping methods (see <<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC86783/>> and <<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2730281/>>).

Cozumel, a tourist destination, is an island in the Caribbean Sea, 20 km (12 miles) off the eastern coast of Mexico's Yucatan Peninsula, opposite the town of Playa del Carmen and 60 km (36 miles) south of the coastal city of Cancun. Cozumel is one of the 9 municipalities of the state of Quintana Roo. The main town on the island is San Miguel de Cozumel (<<http://maps.thefullwiki.org/Cozumel>>).

A map of the state of Quintana Roo can be accessed at: <[http://travelamap.com/mexico/quintanaroo\\_1.htm](http://travelamap.com/mexico/quintanaroo_1.htm)>. The HealthMap/ProMED-mail interactive map of Mexico is available at: <<http://healthmap.org/promed/index.php?name=Mexico,%20Mexico&g=3996063&v=23,-102,5>>.

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