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# Two new cases of legionnaires' disease in Kent brings total to five

Home staff

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Two new cases of legionnaires' disease were being investigated, health officials said.

The Health Protection Agency (HPA) said that it was now leading an inquiry into five confirmed cases of the disease in east Kent, three of which had links with the William Harvey Hospital in Ashford.

The two fresh cases were of women with underlying health problems, and both were said to be seriously ill but stable at the William Harvey Hospital. One has no link to any hospital and the other had been an inpatient at the hospital, the HPA said.

Last week Kevin Carroll, 50, who had no known link to the William Harvey Hospital, was admitted with the disease. He later died.

Dr Mathi Chandrakumar, the director of the Kent Health Protection Unit, said: "We are working closely with our partners in the NHS to try to identify the source of these infections.

"This will include investigating all places each person visited in the two weeks before they fell ill. At present there is no evidence that the cases are linked."

Following the diagnoses, engineering staff at the William Harvey Hospital disinfected shower and bath fittings. Showers, baths and water births were temporarily suspended and the hospital's water system was flushed through.

Legionnaires' disease is caught by inhaling water droplets that carry the Legionella bacterium. Early symptoms include a flu-like illness with aching muscles, tiredness, headaches, dry cough and fever. The incubation period is usually between two days and two weeks.

Although rare, it is potentially serious and is most likely to affect those with chronic lung and heart disease or those being treated with drugs that lower the immune system. The disease cannot be spread from person to person.

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