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Infection Causing Serious Cases of Pneumonia Called Legionnaires' Disease Detected in U.S. Virgin Islands

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The V.I. Dept. of Health has announced that cases of Legionnaires' disease, a type of severe pneumonia caused by breathing in tiny droplets of water containing Legionella bacteria, has recently been detected in both St. Thomas and St. Croix.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the disease is a very serious type of pneumonia (lung infection) caused by bacteria called Legionella. If you develop pneumonia symptoms and may have been exposed to Legionella, see a doctor right away. Be sure to mention if you have used a hot tub, spent any nights away from home, or stayed in a hospital in the last two weeks.

In the U.S. Virgin Islands, many residents rely on cisterns for water for showering and other household uses. These cisterns can be another place where Legionella can grow, so it is important to make sure to clean and disinfect your cistern regularly, said the health department. Performing regular cleaning and maintenance on any shower heads, hot tubs, tank water heaters, and any other water tanks used to store potable water will help decrease your risk and keep your family safe.

The CDC further states that outbreaks of Legionnaires' disease are often associated with large or complex water systems like those found in hospitals, hotels, and cruise ships.

The most likely sources of infection include: Water used for showering (potable water), cooling towers (parts of large air conditioning systems), decorative fountains, and hot tubs.

Signs and symptoms of Legionnaires' disease can include: coughing, muscle aches, fever, shortness of breath, and headaches, according to D.O.H.

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For more information, see [this](#) CDC Legionnaires' disease fact sheet.