

Legionellosis

Agent: *Legionella* species (bacteria); most infections in the United States are caused by *Legionella pneumophila*

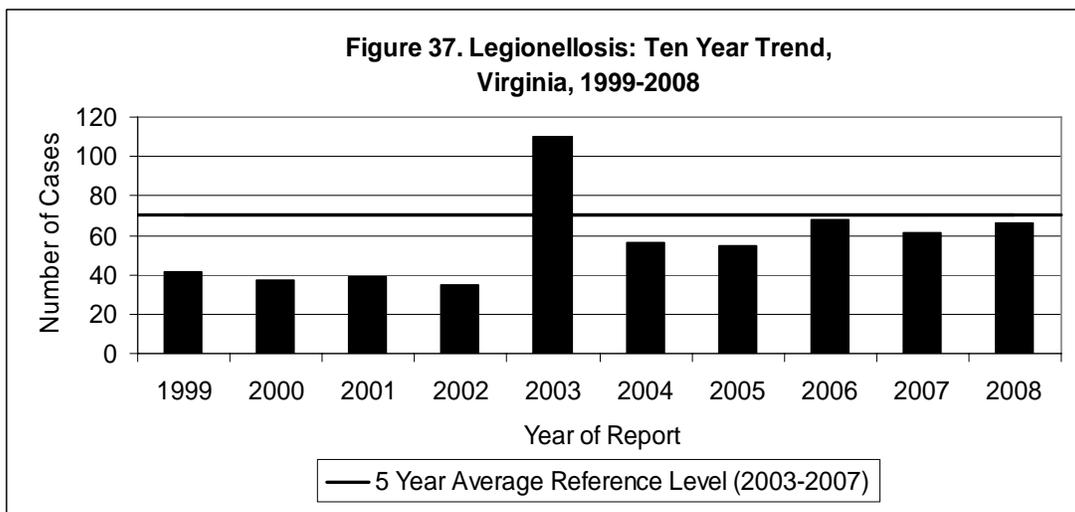
Mode of Transmission: Inhalation of contaminated aerosols (e.g., water sprays, mists).

Signs/Symptoms: Infection with *L. pneumophila* causes two distinct illnesses: Legionnaires' disease, characterized by fever, muscle aches, headaches, malaise, cough, and pneumonia; and Pontiac fever, a mild influenza-like illness without pneumonia. Pontiac fever and Legionnaires' disease are referred to as "legionellosis", separately or together.

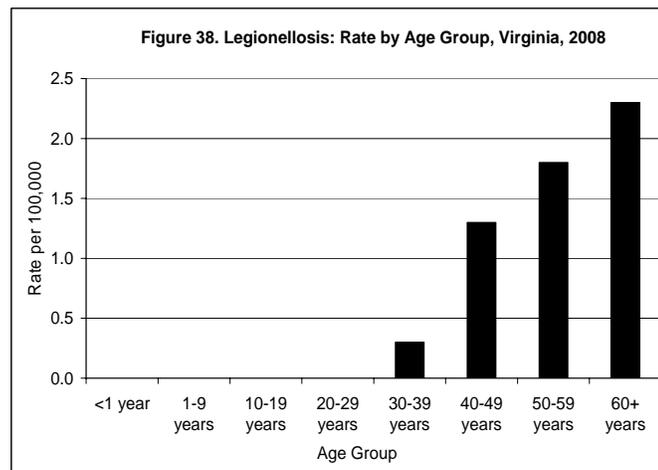
Prevention: For outbreaks, disinfection of contaminated water sources by chlorination or superheating of water from 160° - 170°F, and appropriate mechanical cleaning.

Other Important Information: Legionellosis is more common among people who smoke or have chronic medical conditions.

Sixty-six cases of legionellosis were reported in Virginia during 2008. This is an 8% increase from the 61 cases reported in 2007, and a 6% decrease from the five year average of 70 cases per year (Figure 37). This is consistent with a national pattern which showed a sudden increase in legionellosis cases in 2003, and higher incidence in the post-2003 period than in the pre-2003 period.



The highest incidence occurred among adults age 60 and over (2.3 per 100,000) and no cases were reported among persons younger than 30 years of age (Figure 38). By race, incidence was similar for the black and white populations (0.8 and 0.7 per 100,000, respectively). Males had a higher incidence than females (1.1 and 0.6 per 100,000, respectively). Regionally, the northwest region



had the highest incidence (1.3 per 100,000), followed closely by the southwest and central regions (1.1 per 100,000 each). Cases were fairly evenly distributed throughout the year. One outbreak attributed to *Legionella pneumophila* was reported in 2008. The outbreak was associated with the water system of an assisted living facility and involved two residents of the facility. Among cases reported in 2008, nine deaths were attributed to legionellosis and occurred in persons ranging in age from 36 to 91 years. Six were male and three were female.