

News story: Increase in cases of Legionnaire's disease in Palmanova, Mallorca

Public Health England (PHE) has seen a recent increase in the number of cases of Legionnaire's disease in people who have travelled to a town called Palmanova, in Mallorca, Spain.

Since mid-September, 17 British travellers have returned from the area with the infection. Legionnaire's disease is an infection from the local environment and does not pass from person to person.

There are some groups who are at increased risk of Legionnaire's disease, including people:

- aged 50 or over
- with underlying medical conditions (such as diabetes, kidney disease, or a pre-existing lung condition)
- with weakened immune systems (for example, people on certain types of cancer treatment)
- who smoke or have smoked heavily in the past and heavy alcohol drinkers

Nick Phin, Deputy Director at PHE said:

At this time, the source is under investigation and the Spanish authorities are leading the response to this outbreak. We are active in responding to any requests for information on UK cases from the Spanish authorities.

We are advising people who have travelled or are planning to travel to Palmanova in Mallorca to be aware of the signs and symptoms of Legionnaire's disease, which are initially flu-like. This is particularly important if you are in a group at increased risk of infection such as those with underlying medical conditions, smokers or people aged 50 or over.

Once infection starts in the lungs, symptoms may become pneumonia-like, such as a persistent cough. If you do experience symptoms, speak to your GP as soon as possible and inform them of your travel.

PHE is advising people who have already travelled to Palmanova, Mallorca to be aware of the symptoms of Legionnaire's disease. If they develop these symptoms, they should alert their GP, telling them about their recent travel.

Initial symptoms are usually flu-like and include:

- mild headaches
- muscle pain
- high temperature (fever – usually 38C or above)
- chills tiredness and changes to your mental state, such as confusion

Once infection starts in your lungs, you may also experience symptoms of pneumonia, such as a persistent cough. This is usually dry at first, but as the infection develops, you may start coughing up phlegm or (in some rare cases) blood, whilst experiencing shortness of breath and chest pains.

If you plan to travel to Palmanova, Mallorca and are at increased risk of contracting Legionnaire's disease (as above), we advise that you look out for the symptoms of the infection. Contact your GP or another health professional immediately if you think you have been affected, telling them about your recent travel.