Legionnaire’s Disease: A Water Birth Concern

What is Legionnaire’s Disease?

Caused by the bacteria Legionella pneumophilla

Common symptoms
Cough, shortness of breath, decreased feeding, irritability, high fever

A severe, often lethal form of pneumonia (lung infection)

How is it spread?

- Naturally found in warm water and can easily spread in birthing tubs/pools that are not properly cleaned and disinfected
- Spread by breathing in small droplets of water containing the bacteria during or after water birth

How difficult is it to treat?

- Legionnaires’ disease is treated with antibiotics
- Most babies who get sick need care in a hospital
- Treatment effectiveness depends on baby’s overall health status as well as how quickly the baby is diagnosed and treated after becoming ill

How can I prevent it?

Do

- Do become knowledgeable of water birth, considering benefits and risks at different stages of labor
- Do develop and implement infection prevention protocols and procedures

Do Not

- Do not use birthing tubs/pools that have circulating water, heating elements and are difficult to clean (e.g. whirlpool tubs)
- Do not leave water in the tub for more than six hours

cdc.gov/legionella
Adapted from: Texas Department of State Health Services
www.preventHAlaz.gov