

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

