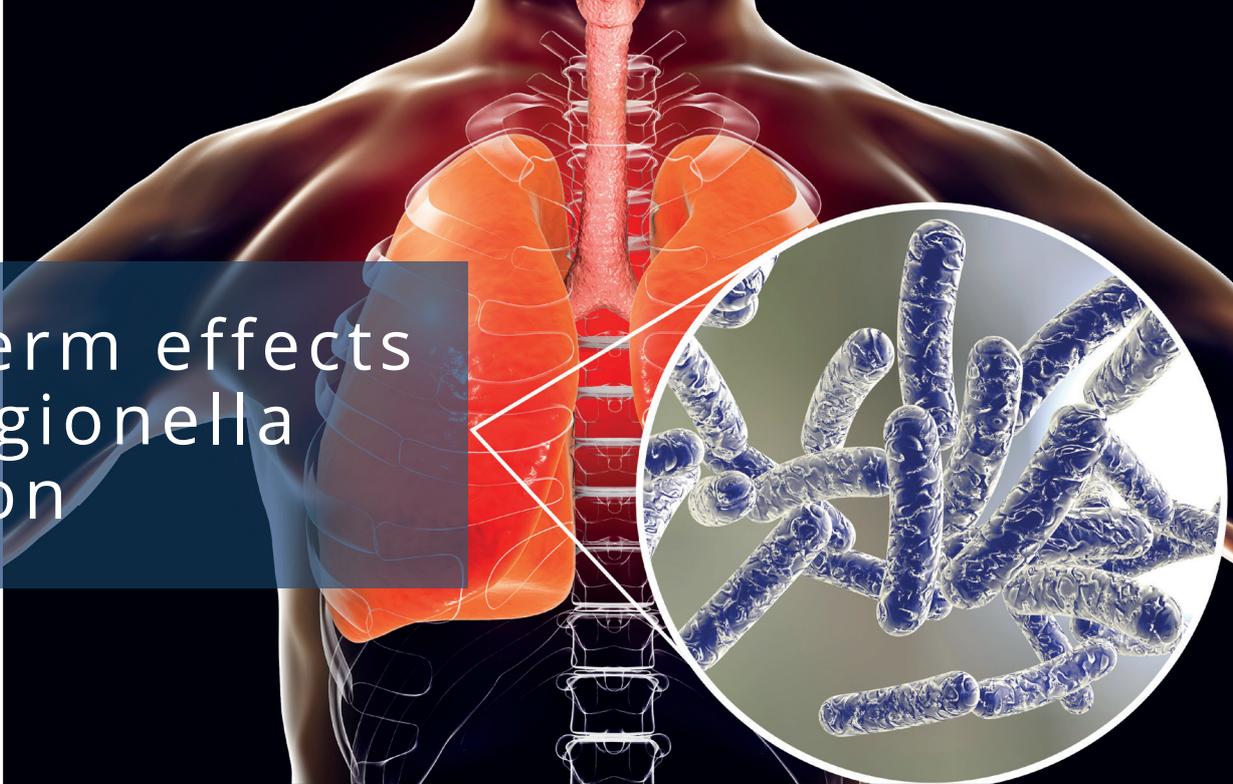


Long-term effects of a Legionella infection



Getting infected with Legionella can have consequences during the rest of your life, what can you expect?



1 Legionella can cause Legionnaires' Disease



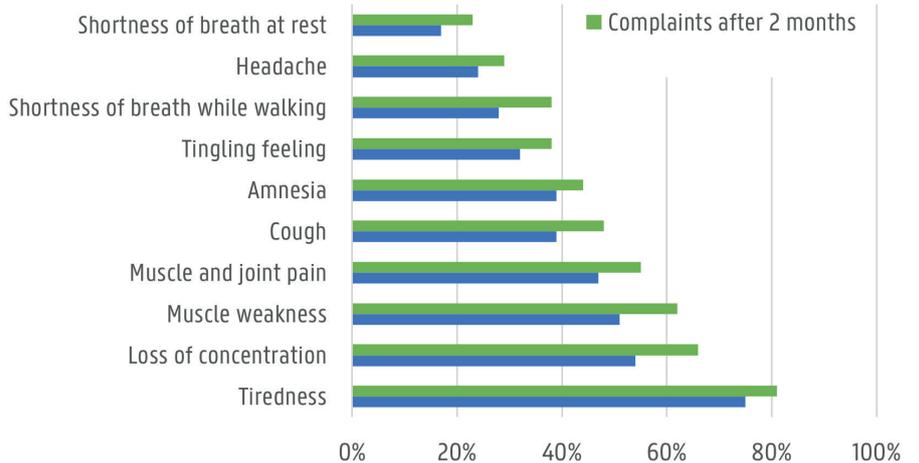
2 This disease can have long-term consequences

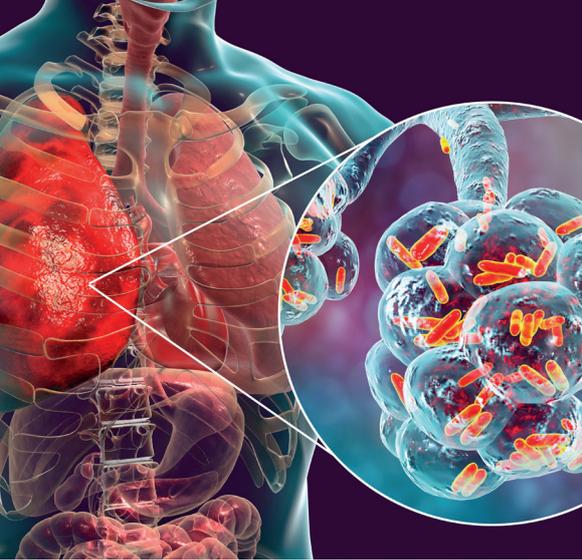


3 Number of cases are underestimated

Legionella is a bacterium that can cause an acute respiratory infection. People are getting infected by inhaling aerosols (small water droplets), for example in the shower. These aerosols can contain Legionella. If you are susceptible to Legionella, the complaints usually develop between 2 to 10 days after exposure to the bacteria. The complaints are headache, muscle pain, confusion followed by a mild flu (Pontiac Fever) or in worst case pneumonia with high fever (Legionnaires' disease).

What is less widely known, however, are the long-term consequences of a Legionella infection. A Legionella infection can change you physically and mentally. In a study on the long-term consequences of a Legionella infection, 86 victims were followed for 1.5 years (AMC, 2000). Their complaints after 2 and 17 months were compared.





After an infection, **25%** of the victims are completely incapacitated for work. Cases are known of people that were not able to speak or walk anymore, and needed to learn it again. After 5 years, **80%** of the victims still have residual complaints, such as fatigue, concentration problems, forgetfulness, muscle and joint pain. Additionally, **90%** of the victims indicates that they are still severely limited in their social activities, even after 5 years (*Herforth-Blom, 2004*).

Do you suffer from the following symptoms: rapid headache, muscle pain and a general ill feeling, followed by pneumonia with a fever above 39°C, cough and sometimes shortness of breath? Then contact your doctor and mention the possibility of a Legionella infection. Because the complaints are rather general, making the diagnosis can be difficult.

For references and more information, visit www.konax.com.

References

- Academisch Medisch Centrum (AMC), 2000.
- Herforth-Blom, E.S (2004). Gezondheid getroffen van een legionellabesmetting. Onderzoeksverslag. Utrecht: Universiteit Utrecht.
- Stichting Veteranenziekte, www.stichtingveteranenziekte.nl.