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Nassau LONG ISLAND

# Club's pool area tests positive for Legionnaires' bacteria

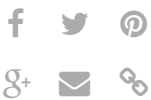
Updated January 6, 2017 8:51 AM

By Delthia Ricks [delthia.ricks@newsday.com](mailto:delthia.ricks@newsday.com)

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The LA Fitness sports club in Garden City Park where Nassau County health officials said two samples taken in the pool area tested positive for bacteria that cause Legionnaires' disease, shown on Thursday, Jan. 5, 2017. Photo Credit: Howard Schnapp



## HIGHLIGHTS

- Officials: Two cases of the disease confirmed so far
- LA Fitness in Garden City Park ordered to close pool and spa

The bacteria that cause Legionnaires' disease have been confirmed at an LA Fitness sports club in Garden City Park, forcing the pool and spa areas to be closed by the county health commissioner until further notice, Nassau County health officials said Thursday.

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So far, two cases of Legionnaires' disease have been confirmed, but because of the ongoing investigation health officials cannot say definitively how many illnesses are connected with the facility, located at 2350 Jericho Tpke.

"We have requested that LA Fitness notify all of their members and guests who utilized the facility in November and December," Mary Ellen Laurain, a spokeswoman for the Nassau County Department of Health, said Thursday.

Legionnaires' disease causes a form of pneumonia that is contracted through exposure to aerosols and mists from contaminated water. The bacteria are found naturally in the environment and most often are associated with air conditioning and water systems.

The infectious organisms are not spread person-to-person, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The pathogen causes flu-like symptoms, Laurain said, advising that anyone who recently used the gym's pool or hot tub and is experiencing a cough, fever and muscle aches should contact their health provider.

Scientific samples were taken at the gym last month and findings resulted in a commissioner's order to close the pool and hot tub areas. The order was issued Dec. 30, she said.

A commissioner's order suspends "all or part of a facility's permit, and in this instance it was part of the permit, the pool area," Laurain said. Dr. Lawrence Eisenstein, Nassau County's health commissioner, is granted the authority to issue the order under New York Public Health Law.

"The two samples were [taken] in the pool area and they tested positive for Legionella pneumophila 1," she said, referring to the most prevalent disease-causing variant. The CDC lists 15 known subtypes of the bacteria.

Any discovery of Legionella bacteria in New York must be reported to state health officials, Laurain said, and the county health department is working in collaboration with the state

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Department of Health, which confirmed the bacterial strain at the gym.

LA Fitness employees, who responded to Newsday's phone inquiries Thursday without disclosing their names, said the pool and spa areas were closed, but patrons can use the sauna, showers, locker room and other facilities.

A check of the gym's app indicates its Thursday "Aquafit" class was canceled, though no reason for the cancellation was given. The same classes at 9 a.m. Friday and 9 a.m. Saturday also were marked canceled. There were no pool classes offered Sunday, and the 9 a.m. Aquafit class on Monday was not marked as canceled, according to the app.

Legionnaires' disease affects 200 to 800 people in New York annually, according to state Health Department statistics. Laurain said there were 56 Legionnaires' disease cases in Nassau in 2016, compared with 60 in 2015.

In 2015, Legionella bacteria were isolated from several water towers in Long Island school districts, and in the Bronx more than a dozen people died after exposure to contaminated mists associated with air-conditioning cooling units.

**CORRECTION:** The total number of cases of Legionnaires' disease in Nassau in 2016 and 2015 was incorrect in a previous version of this story.

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