



Is Your Hot Tub A Stew For Deadly Bacteria?

'Hot Tub Rash'

A Spa User's Information

David Goldstein
Reporting

They're a great way to relax, but one woman's dip in a hot tub nearly cost her her life. Now she's warning others about her horrifying ordeal. CBS 2 investigative reporter David Goldstein has her story.

The warm water of a hot tub nearly cost Stacy Intille her life.

"They said 'Stacy you're going to die,'" Intille recalls.

Intille and her boyfriend stayed at the Marina Dunes Resort in Monterey and soaked in a private hot tub on the balcony of their room - one that is supposed to be drained and filled after each use.

"I thought it would be nice to have a hot tub -- help my back -- therapeutic before I went back to work," Intille said.

But days later she came down with flu-like symptoms -- congestion in her lungs. Her doctor was scared.

"He walked in with this frightened look and said, 'I don't know what you have, Stacy, but I have to admit you to the ICU right away.'"

It turns out she had Legionnaires' disease -- a rare, often-fatal illness that's a form of pneumonia.

And where did she get it?

In the hot tub -- the health department found legionella bacteria -- which can cause Legionnaires' disease.

In a hot tub similar to the one Intille was in, you can see it's difficult to drain all the way and even when you do -- water remains in the jets or the motor. That's where it could become contaminated."

"Very serious," says Matt Freije, an expert on Legionnaires' disease.

"Hot tubs are perfect breeding grounds for legionella as well as other organisms that make people sick," Freije says. "The bubbles bursting into the air can actually emit the airborne particles that a person can inhale into their lungs."

On tripadvisor.com, where people review hotels, there are dozens of stories of guests who got allegedly got sick from hotel hot tubs.

It's a dark secret that Intille is now trying to make known to everyone.

"I've been a nurse for 20 years. Worked in the ICU...ER...and I had no idea you can get legionnaires disease from a spa," Intille says.

Public hot tubs that sit by the pool are usually inspected by the health department -- and are required to have chlorine and chemicals to fight off bacteria.

However, in-room tubs are not regulated.

But now Intille has convinced health officials in Monterey and San Luis Obispo to impose strict guidelines because of what happened to her -- in the hopes it won't happen to others.

"The risk is you don't know what infections the person before you could be carrying," she says.

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