

thirteen

Managing and building homes



Water Hygiene

A guide to
staying safe
in your *home*

Important advice for customers

This leaflet tells you about the risks of contracting Legionnaires' disease, and gives you some simple tips to help you safely prevent it.

We need to ensure you are aware of the causes and symptoms of Legionnaires' disease so you can identify any problems and report concerns to us.

What is Legionnaires' disease?

Legionnaires' disease is a potentially fatal form of pneumonia, which can affect anyone.

It is caused by the inhalation of small droplets of water from contaminated sources containing Legionella bacteria.



0°C

Bacterium
dormant



20°C - 45°C

Legionella
will multiply



45°C - 60°C

Legionella
will survive
but cannot
multiply



60°C+

Legionella
will not
survive

Who is at risk?

Anyone can get Legionnaires' disease, but it most commonly affects the elderly, or people with chest, lung or other serious health problems.

Not everyone exposed to Legionella bacteria will become ill. It is not contagious and you can't get it from drinking water.

The symptoms of Legionnaires' disease are similar to those of flu:

- high temperature
- fever or chills
- headache
- tiredness
- muscle pain
- dry cough

What to do if you think you may have Legionnaires' disease?

If you think that you or someone in your home has Legionnaires' disease, contact your doctor immediately.

You should also contact us so that we can take the appropriate action to make sure you are safe in your home.



Where is Legionella found?

All hot and cold water systems in homes are a potential source for Legionella bacteria growth.

The main areas of risk are where the bacteria can multiply and increase to dangerous levels and then spread, e.g. in spray from showers and taps, even in dishwasher and washing machine pipes.

Bacteria will grow where water is between 20°C and 45°C and where there is sludge, rust and scale for the bacteria to feed upon and multiply.



Tips to reduce the risk

The risk of Legionella is very low and is easily preventable. The biggest risk is if your home has been empty or if the water systems have not been used for more than one week.

There are a number of simple steps you can take to help keep yourself safe:

- Run the taps for at least three minutes
- Hold the shower head over the drain, to reduce the risk of inhaling water droplets and run the water for a few minutes
- Flush the toilet twice with the lid down
- Keep all shower-heads and taps clean and free from build-up of limescale, mould or algae growth
- Regular cleaning with bleach or an anti-bacterial cleanser every three months will help sterilise and kill any bacteria
- Report any rust or any unusual matter flowing from your water outlets to us or your local water authority
- Dismantle spray taps and clean them of scale and debris every three to six months
- Heat the water in your electric water tank and use it immediately at least two to three times a week
- Drain hosepipes after use and keep out of direct sunlight. Flush through for a couple of minutes before filling paddling pools etc
- Keep stored hot water in your system at a temperature of 60°C or greater (immersion heaters etc.).

Raising the temperature of warm water is one way to control Legionella growth, but could also increase the risk of burns and scalding. Please take care especially if you have children.

Useful websites

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/legionnaires-disease/>

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/legionnaires/index.htm>

Contact us

If you have any questions about Legionnaires' disease please contact our customer service team.

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