



Legionnaires' disease

Information and advice

What can you do to prevent Legionnaires' disease?

The risk of legionella causing illness in your home is extremely low.

Follow these simple tips to protect yourself and your family:

- Run all the taps and shower heads for at least 2 minutes every week to flush standing water out of the pipes
- If you have been away from your home for some time, step outside the room while you do this
- Clean scale and other deposits from shower heads and taps every 3-6 months
- Keep the hot water in your boiler system at a minimum temperature of 60°C
- Flush the toilet twice a week with the lid down to circulate fresh water through the system
- Disconnect and empty any hosepipes when not in use
- Tell us as soon as possible if you have any problems with your hot water system
- Contact us immediately if you notice anything unusual about your water supply e.g. discolouration, sludge or odour.

You can get further information and advice about Legionnaires' disease at www.hse.gov.uk/legionnaires

What is Legionnaires' disease?

Legionnaires' disease is a potentially fatal form of pneumonia that affects the lungs.

The risk of infection increases with age, but some people are at higher risk including:

- people over 45 years of age
- smokers and heavy drinkers
- people suffering from chronic respiratory or kidney disease, diabetes, lung or heart disease
- anyone with an impaired immune system.

Where does it come from?

The legionella bacteria that cause Legionnaires' disease are common in rivers, streams, lakes and reservoirs, but usually in low numbers.

The bacteria may also be found in purpose-built water systems, including residential hot and cold water systems (storage tanks, pipework, taps and showers).

In certain conditions, the bacteria may multiply in these water systems, increasing the risk of Legionnaires' disease.

What are the symptoms?

The symptoms are similar to flu. They may include high temperature, fever/chills, a cough, muscle pains and headaches.

Contact your doctor immediately if you suspect you may have Legionnaires' disease. If your doctor diagnoses Legionnaires', contact us immediately so that we can do a water analysis and carry out any remedial works necessary.

How do people get it?

People contract Legionnaires' disease by inhaling small droplets of water ('aerosol') containing the bacteria, which are suspended in the air. Not everyone who comes into contact with the bacteria gets the disease.

In residential water systems, there is an increased risk of Legionnaires' disease if:

- the temperature of cold water in the system is above 20°C, and the hot water temperature is below 60°C
- there are shower heads, high pressure taps, spa baths, etc. that create a breathable spray of water droplets
- there are deposits that encourage bacteria growth, e.g. rust, sludge, scale
- you have been away from your home for some time, and water has been standing in the system
- there are taps, showers, toilets, hoses etc. that you do not use every day

Contact us

If you have any concerns about the risk of Legionnaires' disease in your home, please contact:

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