

Water Hygiene Factsheet – a guide to Legionnaires’ disease for residents

What is Legionnaires’ disease?

Legionnaires’ disease is a form of pneumonia. It is caused by inhaling small droplets of water which have been contaminated by legionella bacteria. Legionnaires’ disease most commonly affects the elderly, or people with chest and lung problems. Not everyone exposed to legionella becomes ill.

Where is legionella found?

All domestic hot and cold water systems can provide an environment where legionella bacteria can grow. Legionella bacteria is most likely to grow where water is stored between 20-45°C, and where there is sludge, rust or limescale present for the bacteria to feed upon and multiply.

How can you catch Legionnaires’ disease?

Inhaling contaminated water droplets, such as those from a shower. You cannot catch it from drinking contaminated water.

Legionnaires’ disease is easily preventable by putting some simple measures in place, and being aware of the risk. We would recommend you:

- Keep all shower heads and taps clean and free from limescale build up, mould or algae growth.
- Ensure your boiler is set to heat water to 60°C.
- Flush through showers and taps for 2 minutes before their first use after a period of non-use (e.g. after you have been on holiday, or if a room has not been used for a week or more).

If you notice any of the following please contact repairs on 0300 304 5000:

- The cold water is still running warm after you have initially run off any water which may have accumulated in the pipes. It should not be over 20°C.
- There is any debris or discolouration in the water.
- The boiler is not working properly, particularly if the water is not coming out of the taps at a sufficiently high temperature. It should come out of the tap at a temperature of 50°C after it has run for a minute at the longest.

Key points to remember:

- Hot water in the system stays hot
- Cold water in the system is cold
- The water is kept circulated