

Water hygiene

How to prevent Legionnaires' disease



This leaflet contains information about Legionella bacteria, what it is, where it can be found and how to prevent it.



What is Legionnaires' disease?

Legionnaires' disease is a form of pneumonia, caused by Legionella bacteria. With 400-500 cases reported in the UK each year, the disease is quite rare.

Anyone can catch it, but most sufferers tend to be over 50 years old. Anyone with a weak immune system, an underlying condition or those who smoke, are at greater risk.

The bacteria won't multiply in temperatures below 20°C and can't survive above 60°C. Stagnant water stored between 20°C and 45°C provides the best breeding conditions.

How do people get it?

Legionnaires' disease comes from breathing in bacteria contained in small droplets of water, like spray from a shower or taps. It isn't spread directly from person to person, and you can't get it from drinking water.

How can it be prevented?

Legionella bacteria can be found in most water systems, but doesn't usually cause any problems. Here's how you can help to keep bacteria numbers low and prevent disease:

- If you have been away for some time, run your taps/shower for a couple of minutes to flush through any stagnant water.
- It's important to descale your taps and shower heads at least every three months. Any household descaling product will do the trick.
- Make sure taps that are not regularly used, such as taps in outside toilets and gardens, are flushed regularly.
- Keep hot water in tanks and cylinders at a minimum of 60°C
- Water from hot taps should be at a minimum temperature of 50°C. Please be aware of the risk of scalding.
- Report any concerns about low hot water temperatures, low water flow, defective taps, boiler issues or any unusual matter flowing from your taps to us on 0800 131 3348. (0300 123 3511 from your mobile).



If you have any questions, or need help, please get in touch with a member of staff. You can also find out more information, including the symptoms associated with Legionnaires' diseases, by visiting www.nhs.uk/conditions/legionnaires-disease

