



If you have any concerns about Legionnaires' Disease and Water Hygiene or need further advice please contact us on: **0300 111 2211** or **enquiries@choice-housing.org**

If you require this leaflet in an alternative format or if you wish to find out more please contact:

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Your guide to
Legionnaires' Disease
and Water Hygiene

CHOICE GUIDE TO LEGIONNAIRES' DISEASE AND WATER HYGIENE

This guide is to provide advice to tenants on water safety in the home. Legionnaires' disease is one of several diseases caused by the inhalation of water droplets which have been contaminated by legionella bacteria. Legionella bacteria occur in most water systems and are harmless at low concentrations.

Risks arise where the bacteria multiply to high levels which are then dispersed in droplet form by showers, sprays and splashing. These droplets, when inhaled, can cause potentially fatal forms of pneumonia. Both hot and cold water systems can be affected.

Everyone is susceptible to infection with symptoms similar to those of flu:

- Fever, chills or high temperature
- Headaches and/or muscle pains
- Dry coughs

Those most at risk include:

- People over 45 Smokers and heavy drinkers
- People with chronic respiratory or kidney disease
- Anyone with an impaired immune system

The bacteria can quickly multiply where:

- Water temperatures are between 20 - 45°C
- There is a source of nutrients such as rust, sludge and scale to feed the bacteria
- Water stagnates eg hoses or when tenants are on holiday

The following simple precautions will help keep you safe:

- Hot water cylinder thermostats, where fitted, should be set at 60°C.
- When you return home if you have been away for more than a week (for example holidays or hospital stays) heat up your system to the normal temperature, slowly open each tap and run for at least five minutes.
- Cold taps should be flushed until the water runs cold. When flushing taps and other outlets, open slowly and take care not to cause splashing or release of spray droplets to the atmosphere. Remove shower heads or flush into a plastic bag. The bacteria may be extremely harmful if inhaled in droplet and mist form.
- Tap spouts on your bath, basin and sink may become contaminated from external sources. To be safe, regularly sterilise tap spouts by wiping with a dilute bleach solution, if the tap is heavily scaled or contaminated this can be dislodged using a nylon brush or shop bought descaling solution. Shower heads can be removed and cleaned in the sink or dishwasher.
- Flush toilets with the lid down.

- Hosepipes should be stored out of the sun and flushed slowly and carefully if unused for more than a few days. You can remove the head, select a non-spray pattern or flush into a plastic bag before using spray settings.
- Don't remove or interfere with cold water storage tank lids and screens or water pipe insulation.



Remember
to keep systems
clean, flush and
don't spray stale
or stagnant water.