

## Your Guide to Water Hygiene

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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](mailto:enquiries@choice-housing.org)**

# Choice Guide to Water Hygiene and Legionnaires' Disease

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

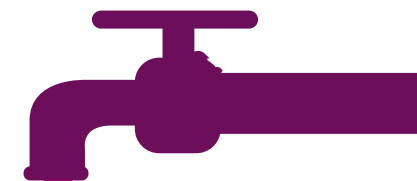
## The bacteria can quickly multiply where:

- 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 tapspouts 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.**