

# Water hygiene your guide for health

We know that a clean water supply is vital to your health and well being. This fact sheet is to help you prevent problems arising and to stay safe and well.

WDH cleans and checks the water systems in relet and improved properties and ensures any concerns about water quality are dealt with as quickly as possible.

Most water systems contain bacteria and other organisms. If these are allowed to multiply they can cause people to become ill. The most common and high risk bacteria are Legionella.

## What is Legionella?

- Legionella bacteria are common and can be found naturally in water sources such as rivers, lakes and reservoirs. They can survive under many environmental conditions and temperatures between 20°C and 45°C encourage their growth.
- Legionnaire's disease can be contracted by breathing in bacteria, either in tiny droplets of water produced by showers or in the droplet particles left after water has evaporated. The Legionella bacteria are breathed deep into the lungs and can cause chest infections, but in the elderly or very young, can prove fatal.

## Where do you find Legionella bacteria?

- Legionella bacteria can breed in other places where water is stored, such as water systems and water-cooling towers.
- The bacteria are more likely to grow where there is sediment, sludge, scale or other materials in the system.

## Is my home at risk from the Legionella bacteria?

- The risk in your home is low because your water is usually stored in small quantities, at temperatures above 45<sup>0</sup>C, and is used daily. This means the bacteria do not usually have the time to grow to significant levels.
- Risk can increase if a property has been empty for long periods of time, such as when tenants leave and the property is not immediately relet. Risk can also increase when you go on holiday for a week or more.

## What can I do to prevent Legionella outbreaks?

Help keep yourself and your family safe. Use the following guidance:

- Store hot water at between 50<sup>0</sup> and 60<sup>0</sup>C. Your boiler will have been set to this temperature when you moved in. See your boiler instructions for further information.
- If your property is empty for over a week, you should turn on your boiler / water heater and run the hot water for ten minutes. This does not apply to homes with combination boilers.
- When water is at the correct temperature (you can check on your thermostat), place showerheads under water and leave running for at least two minutes.
- Clean showerheads and hoses every three months by removing the head of the shower and cleaning in hot water.
- Ensure that you turn on taps, including any in your garden each week for at least two minutes.

For any more information or to discuss further concerns, please phone OneCALL 0845 8 507 507.

**We are committed to providing equal access to information. If you would like this information in another language or format, please phone us on 0845 8 507 507.**