Water Hygiene

Keeping you and your family safe in your home

Ashford Borough Council



What is Legionnaires' disease?

Legionnaires' disease is a potentially fatal form of pneumonia, which can affect anyone.

It is caused by the inhalation of small droplets of water from contaminated sources containing Legionella bacteria.

0°C
Bacterium dormant

20°C - 45°C
Legionella will multiply

45°C - 60°C
Legionella will survive but cannot multiply

60°C+
Legionella will not survive

Who is at risk?

Anyone can get Legionnaires' disease, but it most commonly affects the elderly, or people with chest, lung or other serious health problems. Not everyone exposed to Legionella bacteria will become ill. It is not contagious and you can't get it from drinking water.

The symptoms of Legionnaires' disease are similar to those of flu:

- high temperature
- fever or chills
- headache
- tiredness
- muscle pain
- dry cough

Where is Legionella found?

All hot and cold water systems in homes are a potential source for Legionella bacteria growth.

The main areas of risk are where the bacteria can multiply and increase to dangerous levels and then spread, e.g. in spray from showers and taps, even in dishwasher and washing machine pipes.

Bacteria will grow where water is between 20°C and 45°C and where there is sludge, rust and scale for the bacteria to feed upon and multiply.

What is Ashford Borough Council doing to reduce the risk of Legionella bacteria developing?

- Carry out regular risk assessments to identify the level of risk and implement a suitable maintenance and monitoring regime on all shared water systems.
- Regularly collate and monitor temperature readings, carry out sampling and disinfection treatment.
- Ensure risk assessors and water management contractors are experienced and accredited having specialist knowledge on Legionella and water treatment services.
- Identify, improve and upgrade water systems in order to remove or reduce the risk of legionella bacteria developing.
- Provide health and safety advice to all our tenants and leaseholders on how to reduce the risk with good housekeeping.

The following good housekeeping advice will keep your family safe:

The biggest risk is if your home has been empty for more than one week without running water and these simple steps can reduce that risk:

- Run the taps for at least three minutes
- Hold the shower head over the drain, to reduce the risk of inhaling water droplets and run the water for a few minutes
- Flush the toilet twice with the lid down.

Other tips to reduce risk:

- Keep all shower-heads and taps clean and free from build-up of lime scale, mould or algae growth.
- Regular cleaning with bleach or an anti-bacterial cleanser every three months will help sterilise and kill any bacteria.
- Report any rust or any unusual matter flowing from your water outlets to us or your local water authority.
- Heat the water in your hot water tank and use it immediately at least two to three times a week.
- Hot water should be stored at a temperature of 60°C or greater (immersion tanks etc.).
- Drain hosepipes after use and keep out of direct sunlight. Flush through for a couple of minutes before filling paddling pools etc.
- Hot Tubs and Spa Pools bring a heightened risk of legionella bacteria and manufacturer's advice on maintenance and cleaning should always be followed.
- Ensure that you turn on taps (including any in your garden) each week for at least two minutes.
- Raising the temperature of warm water is one way to control Legionella growth, but could also increase the risk of burns and scalding. Please take care especially if you have children.

Useful websites

www.nhs.uk/conditions/legionnaire/disease

www.hse.gov.uk/legionnaires/index.htm

Always provide access to maintenance and service contractors.

Report all faults and repairs immediately to:

housing.compliance@ashford.gov.uk

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