



## Tenants Guide to Water Hygiene Control Measures in the Home.

### Guidance on Legionnaires' Disease

#### What is Legionnaires' Disease

Legionnaires' Disease is a pneumonia-like illness caused by legionella bacteria and is potentially fatal. Everyone is susceptible to infection, however, some people are at higher risk, including:

- People over 45 years of age;
- Smokers and heavy drinkers;
- People suffering from chronic respiratory or kidney disease; and,
- Anyone with an impaired immune system.

Legionella bacteria are common and naturally occurring, the bacteria is comparatively harmless where it exists in low concentrations. Legionella bacteria are found in the natural environment and may contaminate and grow in water systems, including domestic hot and cold water systems. They survive low temperatures and thrive at temperatures between 20 – 45°C if the conditions are right. They are killed by high temperatures at 60°C or above.

#### Breeding grounds within the home

Domestic hot and cold water systems can provide an environment where Legionella bacteria can grow. Legionnaires' Disease can be caused by the inhalation of small droplets of contaminated water containing Legionella bacteria. Residents of rented domestic accommodation should follow the below guidelines to minimise the risk of Legionnaires' Disease within their home.

#### Most importantly, make sure that:

- Hot water in the system is kept hot;
- Cold water is kept cold;
- The water is kept circulated.

#### In particular, it is important that you:

- Tell us if the boiler or hot water tank are not working properly, particularly if the water is not coming out of the taps at a sufficiently high temperature. It should come out at a temperature of 50°C after it has run for a minute at the latest.
- Do not interfere with the settings on your boiler or hot water system. The hot water should be set so that the water is heated up to 60°C.
- Tell us if the cold water is still running warm after you have initially run off any water, which may have accumulated in the pipes. It should not be above 20°C.
- Tell us if there are problems, debris or discolouration in the water.



### Where showers are fitted:

- If they are used only occasionally then flush them through by running them for at least 2 minutes once a week on the hottest setting. Flushing should be carried out on each spray setting.
- It is preferable to have the showerhead removed from the hose to avoid dispersing the water in aerosol droplets, but if this isn't possible, remove it from the shower bracket, cover it with a towel or plastic bag and place the shower head in the base of the shower tray/bath.
- Keep out of the way of any spray/mist whilst this is being done as far as possible.
- Clean the shower head periodically, descale and disinfect it. This should be done at least every 3 months.

### Going on Holiday & Vacant Periods

Where a property is left vacant for any time, e.g. over the term breaks and family holiday periods, please make sure that when it is occupied again at the outset both hot and cold water systems are flushed through by running all outlets.

If you have been away for a week or more, run the water through to clear the water that has been sitting in the hot and cold water system/pipes. During the summer period the cold water storage tank in your home could have sat for the whole time at over 20°C, encouraging breeding. This is less likely to be a problem in the winter when the cold water will be stored at a cooler temperature. A thorough flushing of tap outlets will enable a cold water storage tank to replenish with fresh cooler cold water.

- Turning on taps in basins and baths and flushing the toilets is the most effective. Run water from both hot and cold supplies for 5 minutes. If on a single mixer tap, turn the tap on to its hottest setting run water on hottest through tap for 5 minutes. Then turn the tap on to cold only and run water through tap for a further 5 minutes. The water should be run slowly to avoid spray for 1<sup>st</sup> minute and can then be run faster for a further 4 minutes.
- To wash through the shower head, put the shower head down in the bath or shower tray to avoid too many water droplets in the air and flush through as detailed above.
- The hot water should be set and maintained above 45°C to prevent breeding in the hot water tank. This means that each time the water is heated, it should be making it hard from them to breed.  
Raising the temperature of your hot water system to 60°C for a 1 hour period and flushing of HW tap outlets will ensure that any bacteria will be killed off.

**NB - If your hot water is maintained at a temperature that is less than that which is recommended, then the hot water temperature should be increased to 60°C for a 1 hour period each week and the hot water outlets flushed through**

**'WARNING' Please be aware of scalding risk when carrying out flushing on any hot water outlet. It is essential that the outlet is not left unoccupied during the flushing period.**

- Run water through infrequently used outlets. For example, if you have any secondary WC/bathroom that is not used very often, then ensure you run water through both taps on



the wash hand basin and the toilet and shower periodically and certainly before anyone might be using those facilities.

Trust customers have an important part to play in taking these simple and practical precautions. Carrying out these simple precautions will dramatically reduce the risk of contracting any of the diseases associated with this bacteria.

Comprehensive advice is available on the Health and Safety Executive's web site and through their publication L8.