



Legionella:

Everything you need to know

What is Legionella?

Legionella is a type of bacteria that can enter your water supply. The bacteria grows when water is stored between the temperatures of 20 to 45 degrees and feeds on limescale buildup and other debris.

What are the effects of Legionella?

Legionella can cause illnesses such as Pontiac Fever or Legionnaires' Disease. Both have flu-like symptoms and, in more serious cases, can lead to pneumonia. It is not contagious and it is not contracted by drinking water contaminated by the Legionella bacteria.

These illnesses are contracted from inhaling contaminated water droplets, especially taps and showers that are not often used. Air conditioning systems, humidifiers, pools and hot tubs are also a common systems where Legionella can form.

People most at risk are:

45+

People over 45 years of age.



People who smoke.



People suffering from chronic respiratory or kidney disease.



People with diabetes, lung or heart disease.



Anyone who is immunocompromised.

WestKent

Places to live. Space to grow.

Our responsibility



We will complete water hygiene risk assessments on all communal water systems as these are considered more complex and higher risk. Following these risk assessments, we will complete all recommended works to ensure water outlets such as taps or communal toilets are flushed through to prevent stagnant water.



We will monitor the temperatures within these water systems regularly.



We will carry out a random sample of 250 checks in domestic properties each year to ensure that the lower-risk systems are also well-maintained.



In our homes which have been empty for longer than 30 days, we will turn off the water supply and then ensure it's turned back on and flushed through before any new resident moves in.

How can you reduce the risk of Legionella?

There is a low risk of Legionella being in your water supply at home. This is because most properties do not have complex water systems, do not store large amounts of water, and the water is used regularly.

However, there are things you can do as follows:

- Keep all taps and water outlets clean and free from debris and limescale buildup.
- Clean your shower heads at least once every three months.
- If you leave your home for more than a week, run all your taps for a few minutes when you return home.
- If some taps are not used regularly each week, ensure they run and are flushed through before use.
- Flush toilets with the lid down following a period of no use.
- Make sure your hot water tank's thermostat is set to at least 60 degrees. This temperature kills Legionella bacteria.
- Take care when using hot tubs. The water within these is kept at the ideal temperature for bacteria to grow and multiply. If you do use one, ensure the manufacturer's guidelines for maintenance, cleaning, and disinfection are followed, as well as draining them down when not in use.
- Run garden taps weekly and drain hosepipes of water; avoid storing them in direct sunlight.
- Water butts should not be used with a hosepipe; ensure they are kept clean and drained down regularly.
- If after running your cold tap for a few minutes the water is warm, let us know.
- If after running the hot tap for a few minutes the water isn't heating up properly, let us know.
- Do not disturb cold water storage tanks. Leave them sealed, insulated and covered with the right lid.
- Clean any water softeners fitted to the incoming mains water supply as recommended by the manufacturer.

If you have any questions or concerns, please get in touch. We're here to help.

**Call us on 01732 749400 or
email help@wkha.org.uk**