
FACTSHEET

LEGIONELLA

What's legionella?

Legionella is natural bacteria found in water and water systems. It can cause different illnesses such as Pontiac Fever, Lochgoilhead Fever and Legionnaires' disease.

Although it's very rare, it's possible to catch these through a domestic water system.

Am I at risk from legionella?

The risk increases with age but some people are at higher risk, including:

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

Facts about legionella

- You can't catch legionella by drinking water. The biggest risk is from breathing in contaminated water droplets.
- The risks are higher where water has sat in the hot/cold water tank for a long time and is warm enough for the bacteria to breed (20–45°C).
- There's an increased risk if there are any deposits in the water such as sludge, rust, scale or dirt on taps or shower heads.

What can I do to avoid legionella?

There are a few simple steps you can take to reduce the risk of catching a legionella-linked illness, including:

- 1 If you've been away from home for a week or more, turn your hot and cold taps on in your sinks, wash basins and bath. Slowly run the water for one minute and then run the water quickly for at least two minutes. Flush your toilets twice, with the lid closed, to clear the water system.
- 2 Wash through the shower - remove the shower head and run the water for at least two minutes. Where it's not possible to remove the shower head, put the shower head down in the bath or shower tray or cover it with a towel or plastic bag to stop water droplets getting into the air.
- 3 Set the hot water temperature at 60°C. If you have a bathroom that's rarely used, run the water through all the taps (including the sink, bath, shower and toilet) on a weekly basis or before somebody uses the room, following the steps above.
- 4 Regularly use, clean and disinfect all taps, toilets and shower heads and keep them scale free.
- 5 Keep the lid on your water tank/toilet cistern.

When should I contact you?

You need to contact us if:

- The water coming out of your taps, shower or toilet contains any debris or is discoloured.
- Your boiler or hot water tank isn't working properly, especially if the water temperature is lower than 50°C after running for two minutes.
- The cold water is still running warm i.e. above 20°C after two minutes.

What are you doing as a landlord?

As part of our landlord obligations, we're carrying out water hygiene risk assessments. If we contact you to carry out a water hygiene risk assessment, you can help by letting our assessor into your home to check your water. The check takes between 30 minutes to one hour.

For more information about legionella, visit the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) website.

 [hse.gov.uk/legionnaires](https://www.hse.gov.uk/legionnaires)

Things to remember

Most importantly, make sure that:

- Hot water in the system remains hot
- Cold water remains cold
- The water is kept circulated
- Taps and shower heads are kept clean and free of scale.