

What is Legionnaire's disease?

Legionnaire's disease is caused by legionella bacteria. This bacteria are common in natural water sources such as rivers, lakes and reservoirs, but usually in low numbers. They may also be found in purpose-built water systems such as hot and cold water systems.

People contract Legionnaires' disease by inhaling small droplets of water (aerosols), suspended in the air, containing the bacteria.

Is it harmful?

Legionnaires' disease is a potentially fatal form of pneumonia and everyone is susceptible to infection. The risk increases with age but 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
- people suffering from diabetes, lung and heart disease
- anyone with an impaired immune system

The risk of Legionella causing illness in domestic properties is exceedingly low.

How can you reduce the risk of contracting Legionnaire's disease?

Possibly the biggest risk is when you have been away from the property for more than a week or so or there are taps, showers or toilets in your home that are not used daily. This is because the bacteria grows where water is maintained at a steady temperature.

Simple precautions you can do to reduce the risks are to:

- Run taps for at least 60 seconds when you return from being away or every week.
- Flush shower heads by running the shower for a minimum of 60 seconds
- Cleaned showerheads of scale and debris every 3 – 6 months
- Keep the hot water set on your boiler system at a temperature of between 50°C – 60°C. Beware of scalding!
- Flush the toilet twice to circulate fresh water through the system.

If you are concerned about how to reduce the risks of Legionnaire's disease in your home please contact us for further advice on **0113 386 1000**

For more information

See the HSE website <http://www.hse.gov.uk/legionnaires/>