

Guidance on Legionnaires' Disease for tenants and residents of rented domestic accommodation

Domestic hot and cold water systems can provide an environment where Legionella bacteria can grow. This can cause Legionnaires' Disease which is a potentially fatal form of pneumonia caused by inhalation of small droplets of contaminated water containing Legionella bacteria. This advice sheet gives tips for residents of rented domestic accommodation such as houses, bungalows and flats in small blocks.

Most importantly, make sure that:

- **Hot water in the system remains hot**
- **Cold water is kept cold**
- **The water is kept circulated**

In particular, it is important that you –

- **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.
 - There are any problems, debris or discolouration in the water.
 - 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.

Where showers are fitted –

- If they are used only occasionally then flush them through by running them for at least two minutes every week. Keep out of the way whilst this is being done as far as possible.
- Clean the shower head periodically descale and disinfect it. This should be done at least quarterly.

Where a property is left vacant for any time, e.g. student accommodation over the summer holidays, make sure that when it is occupied again at the outset both hot and cold water systems are flushed through by running all outlets for at least 2 minutes.

Legally, it is your landlord's responsibility to take precautions to prevent Legionella being present in the hot or cold water system but tenants and residents also have an important part to play in taking these simple and practical precautions.