Ymddiriedolaeth Genedlaethol
National Trust

Legionella Information for Tenants

The National Trust has formalised it procedures for managing risk from Legionella bacteria at its properties.

As part of this process, we have produced this information for tenants. It provides practical and straightforward advice on what you can do to minimise the risk.

What is Legionella?

Legionella bacteria are common and can be found naturally in water sources such as rivers, lakes and reservoirs, usually in low numbers. The bacteria are usually associated with larger water systems found in factories, hotels, hospitals, museums, and cooling towers. However, they can be found in smaller water supply systems in the home. The bacteria are sensitive to temperature, but the range of 20°c to 45°c is the most favourable for encouraging their growth. The organisms do not usually multiply below 20°c, and will not survive above 60°c.

How can legionella affect your health?

Legionella bacteria can give rise to a range of illnesses similar to pneumonia. The most well-known of these is Legionnaires' disease. Most people who are exposed to legionella will not become ill, and the disease does not spread from person to person.

Although anyone can be affected, it principally affects those who are more susceptible due to age, illness or existing respiratory conditions, those who have a suppressed immune system or who are smokers.

How can people be exposed to Legionella?

People can be exposed to Legionella bacteria by inhaling small droplets of water containing the bacteria suspended in air. This is usually from a mist or aerosol of water such as from showers or spa baths.

There is no risk from drinking water containing the bacteria.

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What can be done to minimise the risk from Legionella?

Run the water off infrequently used outlets

For taps or showers that are infrequently used, such as an outside tap or shower in a guest room, run them occasionally to flush through any stagnant water. Legionella bacteria can breed in stagnant water. Do this carefully to avoid splashing the water and creating a mist. For example, if the shower head is attached via a hose, remove the shower head from its holder and lay the head in the base of the shower.

When you've been away

If you have been away for one week or more, run the taps and showers for a few minutes on your return to flush through any stagnant water. When doing this, take care to avoid splashes.

De-scale Showers

Every three months, dismantle, clean and de-scale shower heads and hoses.

Set the hot water thermostat to 60°c

This is a possible precaution. If you have a temperature control switch or indicator gauge on your hot water heating system, you can set it 60°c - the bacteria will not survive above this temperature. But be careful - this can increase the risk of scalds, so if there are young children, elderly adults or vulnerable persons in the property, this may not be appropriate.

Checking the cold water storage tank?

Where the cold water storage tank can be accessed safely, you can:

- Check that your tank is insulated and that it has a closely fitting lid. By insulating your cold water tank you can ensure that the temperature of the water remains under 20oC and that Legionella bacteria will not breed. This will also ensure that your cold water tank does not freeze in the winter.

- Check the condition of the tank and the water in it. Ideally, there should be no debris in the tank and the water should be clear. If the bottom of the tank contains debris and the water has a film of scum on the top you should clean it out, if possible.

But take care and do not put yourself at risk. The risk from entering an un-floored attic space or using a step ladder to gain access to a water tank is likely to be greater than the risk from legionella.

Ensure hot and cold water pipes are lagged

Lagging the pipes will ensure that cold water stays cold and hot water stays hot and minimises the risk from Legionella.

The risk from Legionella bacteria in domestic homes is extremely low.

Because houses are continuously occupied and water is used on a regular basis, there is very little chance of water stagnating. If you follow the tips listed above you will reduce the risk still further and have no need for concern.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact your local Residential Lettings or Estate Management contact.

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