



You can boost your water hygiene

Description



Go with the flow and boost your water hygiene. Take some simple steps to avoid complex problems in your home.

That's the message from our Property Team. Flushing showers and taps after being away, keeping

shower heads clean and maintaining a 60C temperature in your hot water system will help you steer clear of Legionnaire's disease.

The good news is – it's easily preventable with simple control measures

This is a potentially fatal form of pneumonia, which can affect anyone. It is caused by the inhalation of small droplets of water from contaminated sources containing Legionella bacteria.

Hot and cold water systems in homes are a potential source for Legionella. Main areas of risk are where the bacteria can multiply and spread – eg in spray from showers and taps – even dishwasher and washing machine pipes.

Conditions ripe for colonisation are where water of between 20C and 45C stagnates – and where there is sludge, rust and scale for the bacteria to feed and multiply.

Legionella acquired its name after an outbreak of a 'mystery disease' in 1976 at a convention of the American Legion, an association of US military veterans.

Legionnaire's disease most commonly affects the elderly, or people with chest or lung problems. Not everyone exposed to legionella bacteria becomes ill. The good news is – it's easily preventable with simple control measures.

Risks from hot and cold water systems in most homes are generally considered to be very low, owing to regular water usage and turnover.

Tell MMHS if the boiler or hot water tank is not working properly

However, it is vital to take the following precautions:

- flush through showers and taps for five minutes following a period of non-use (ie after being on holiday or if a room is not in regular use);
- keep all showerheads and taps clean and free from a build-up of lime scale, mould or algae growth;
- keep hot water on your boiler system at a temperature of 60C – and beware of scalding!

In addition, it is important to –

- tell MMHS if the boiler or hot water tank is not working properly, particularly if water is not coming out of the taps at a sufficiently high temperature;
- do not interfere with the settings on your boiler or hot water system. The hot water should be set so it's heated up to 60C;

- tell MMHS 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 20C;
- tell MMHS if there are problems, debris or discolouration in the water.

Apart from the home, Legionnaire's disease may also be caught from your car. A BBC report said a significant number of cases – up to 20 per cent – could be attributed to windscreen washing. The wash bottle is kept warm in the engine compartment and is a breeding ground for the bacteria.

While research into this issue is still underway, the Health Protection Agency advises motorists to add a proprietary screen wash to the car's wiper fluid, according to manufacturer's instructions.

'We have a legal obligation to ensure residents are aware of the possible causes and symptoms of Legionnaire's disease,' said Maintenance and Repair Manager Glenn Fry. 'Then they can identify any problems easily and report any concerns to us.'

Category

1. News & reviews

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Author

cliveprice