

# Water hygiene

Keeping your water supply safe



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**Housing**  
Executive

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## Why water hygiene is important?

This leaflet explains why water hygiene is important and what you need to do to keep your water supply clean and fresh.

Most hot and cold water systems contain bacteria, a harmful strain of this bacteria is *Legionella pneumophila*, which can cause Legionnaires disease.

## What is Legionnaires disease?

Legionnaires' disease is a potentially fatal form of pneumonia, which can affect anybody. It is caused by the inhalation of small droplets of water from sources contaminated with *Legionella* bacteria.

## Where is Legionella found?

All hot and cold water systems in premises are a potential source for *Legionella* bacteria growth. The main areas of risk are where there is a source of food or conditions to grow in any Hot or cold water systems.

- Where an aerosol is created and water is spread, as in showers, spray taps, hoses.
- Water temperatures between 20°C and 45°C.
- Stagnant (non-moving) water.
- Little used taps, toilets, showers, hoses.
- If there is sediment, rust or scale present.
- Water tanks containing dirt and debris.

## Precautions you can take

Day to day hygiene of the water outlets within your property will prevent the above issues or problems developing.

### Taps and showers

- Keep taps and showerheads clean and free from build-up of lime scale, mould or algae.
- Remove the shower head when flushing to avoid releasing spray droplets into the air.
- When flushing Shower heads flush through all the different spray patterns.
- Always rinse with clean water to remove all cleaning products.
- When rinsing food or other items do not allow them to touch the spout of the taps.
- If you have been away from home, for more than one week, run showers and taps for 10 minutes (face away from taps and showers while doing this).

### Toilets

- Flush toilet/s with the lid down.

### Water heater or boiler

- Check your storage water heater or boiler is set at a temperature of 60°C. Be careful of scalding, especially if you have children.

### Hosepipes

- Drain hosepipes after use and keep out of direct sunlight. Flush through for a couple of minutes before filling paddling pools etc.
- Ensure there are no areas of stagnant or standing water.

## **What is the Housing Executive doing?**

We are carrying out risk assessments on our properties, to identify any possible issues and, if required, will arrange for the appropriate repair works to be undertaken by our contractors.

## **For the assessment in your property**

If your property is selected for risk assessment you will be contacted by our risk assessors, who will phone or write to you to arrange access.

Our risk assessors will have photographic identification. Remember don't give access to the assessor unless they have shown you their identification.

Once access arrangements have been made and in preparation for the assessment you should empty the sink and wash hand basins and have the boiler turned on.

The assessors will check storage tanks, water outlets and shower heads.

## **Who is at risk?**

Legionnaire's disease most commonly affects the elderly, or people with chest or lung problems.

Not everyone exposed to Legionella bacteria becomes ill.

Legionnaire's disease is not contagious and you cannot get it from drinking water.

The symptoms of Legionnaire's disease are similar to those of the flu:

- High temperature
- Fever or chills
- Headache
- Tiredness
- Muscle pain
- Dry cough

If you suspect that you or someone in your home has contracted Legionnaires' disease, contact your doctor immediately.

## Housing Executive contact details

If you have any concerns about water hygiene in your home or need further advice, please contact us between 8.30am to 5.00pm on

**03448 920 900**

## Health & Safety Executive

The Health & Safety Executive is the government body that is responsible for water hygiene and Legionnaires' disease.

For further information and advice please visit the Health & Safety Executive website:

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

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