



Legionella



WHAT IS LEGIONELLA?

Legionnaires' disease is a potentially fatal form of pneumonia caused by the legionella bacterium. It is contracted when people inhale small water droplets suspended in air that contains legionella bacteria.

Legionella bacteria can be found in natural water systems, such as rivers and lakes, and artificial water systems e.g. storage tanks, pipe-work, taps and showers. The risks increase if the bacteria is left to multiply.

It can affect anybody but some people are at higher risk, for example those suffering with chronic respiratory or kidney disease.

Although we usually associate legionella with larger water systems, e.g. in hotels, hospitals and cooling towers, the bacteria can also live in smaller water supply systems used in homes and other residential accommodation. Legionella can survive in low temperatures, but thrive at temperatures between 20°C and 45°C. High temperatures of 60°C and over will kill them.



WHAT CAN I DO TO PROTECT AGAINST LEGIONELLA?

There are sensible precautions you can take to reduce the risk of bacteria growing:

- Regularly use all the taps/showers inside and outside your home (both hot and cold).
- If you have been away for over a week gently run all taps/showers to flush them through. If the shower has a flexible hose, lower the showerhead towards the plug to reduce the water spray.
- Keep shower heads clean and de-scaled.
- Make sure that if you have a cold water storage tank in the loft, the lid is on and the tank is insulated.

