

Accent

Water hygiene

Lower the risks of contracting
Legionnaires' disease

As your landlord, it's our responsibility to make sure you know the possible causes and symptoms of Legionnaires' Disease, so you can quickly spot any problems and report any concerns to us.





What is Legionnaires' disease?

Legionnaires' disease is a potentially fatal form of pneumonia, which can affect anybody. It's caused by the inhaling small droplets of water containing legionella bacteria.

Where is Legionella found?

All hot and cold water systems in residential properties are a potential source of legionella bacteria growth. The main areas of risk are where the bacteria can multiply and increase to dangerous levels and then spread, in spray from showers and taps, for example. Perfect conditions for bacterial growth are where there is sludge, rust and scale present for the bacteria to feed on and multiply.

Who is at risk?

Legionnaires' disease most commonly affects the elderly or people with chest or lung problems. Not everyone exposed to legionella bacteria becomes ill. Legionnaires' disease is not contagious.

The symptoms are:


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

Am I at risk?

There's no need to worry. Legionnaires' disease is easily preventable by following our advice on the next page, which will also help you to spot any potential problems. Tell us if your hot water is not heating properly or if there are any problems with the system, so we can take action.

Can I catch Legionnaires' disease from drinking water?

No. People catch Legionnaires' disease by inhaling small droplets of water suspended in the air, which contain bacteria. The bacteria has to be in very small droplets like a spray from a shower or spray taps.



What do I do if I think I've contracted Legionnaires' disease?

If you think you or someone in your home has contracted Legionnaires' disease contact your doctor immediately. You should also tell us so we can take the appropriate measures.

How does Accent manage and control Legionella?

Our legal obligation requires us to regularly inspect, monitor and carry out tests in certain types of properties to make sure water systems are clean.

This includes our independent living, extra care and leasehold schemes for the elderly, where there is a communal heating and hot water system, and communal facilities such as a kitchen, guest room and bathroom. We monitor communal hot water systems in all types of accommodation very carefully. We employ water hygiene contractors to do this.

What precautions can I take?

- ▶ If you haven't used your water for a longer than usual length of time, such as being on holiday, or if the room isn't used often, run and flush the water from your shower on full hot and then full cold for 5 minutes each. When flushing the shower, try not to make any spray. The best way to do this is to either remove the shower head and place the hose over the plug waste point or cover the shower head with a towel or catch the water in a plastic bag.
- ▶ Make sure all taps and outlets are run weekly.
- ▶ Keep all shower heads and taps clean and free from lime scale, mould or algae growth by brushing the scale off with a nylon brush. Regular cleaning with an acid based descaling solution such as 'Viakal' or similar cleaning products (available from supermarkets & DIY stores) every three months will help sterilise and kill any bacteria.
- ▶ Flush toilets with the lid down following a period of non-use.
- ▶ Drain hose pipes after use and keep out of direct sunlight. Run and flush through for a couple of minutes before filling paddling pools etc.
- ▶ Keep the hot water on your boiler system at a temperature of 60°C or greater, or if you have a combination boiler at 50°C.
- ▶ Keep the hot water in your hot water tank (cylinder) at a temperature of 60°C or greater.
- ▶ Legionella bacteria is more likely to grow between 20°C and 45°C. Raising the temperature of hot water is one way to control legionella growth, but could also increase the risk of burns and scalding.
- ▶ Regular use of cold water should also ensure that temperatures stay below 20° C.

What precautions can I take?

- ▶ Make sure your hot water is heating properly and there are no other problems with the system. We'll repair your system if you are a tenant or if you are a leaseholder and we are responsible for your repairs.
- ▶ Recent studies carried out by Public Health England have shown that legionella can be found in your typical garden water butt. The water butt will warm up in the sun, allowing the water inside to reach a high enough temperature for bacterial growth. This contaminated water can then be released in the form of spray or aerosol which you could easily inhale. We recommend that you don't use submersible pumps and hose pipes to extract water from water butts, as they generate spray which can be inhaled. Using a watering can is the safest way of using water from a water butt.

Preventing burns and scalds in the bathroom

- ▶ Always run the cold water first before turning on the hot tap, and check the temperature with a bath thermometer or your elbow before getting into the bath.
- ▶ Always turn the cold water tap off last.
- ▶ Don't leave children alone for any reason while they are in the bath.
- ▶ Use a non-slip mat in the bath and shower.
- ▶ If you use a thermostatic mixing valve (TMV) to control the temperature of the water coming out of your hot water tap, get it regularly checked by a plumber to make sure it's working properly. We don't service TMVs, but if it's broken we will repair or replace it.

Contact us

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Regional office addresses are available on our website, please visit www.accentgroup.org/contact-us for details.

Note: visitors to our offices are by appointment only