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Legionella and water safety

What this guide is about

This leaflet explains how you can keep the water safe in your home.

Who is this guide for

For people who live in a Progress Housing Group home.

Bitesize summary

- Legionella is usually found in larger water systems in communal schemes and blocks of flats
- We manage the risk of legionella in homes using risk assessments and monitoring procedures
- By taking some simple steps, you can make sure your water supply is safe. This includes making sure that you set your hot water cylinder or boiler to at least 60°C or above and running all your cold water taps and showers at least once a week.

Legionella is the name given to a group of bacteria found in most water sources, including streams, rivers and lakes. It can sometimes enter domestic water systems.

Low concentrations are generally not harmful. Legionella is only dangerous if the conditions are right for the bacteria to grow and if you inhale water droplets from a contaminated water system.

The bacteria can cause several infections, most of which are not serious. This includes Legionnaires' disease, which can be fatal in 10% of cases.

The likelihood of legionella being in your home is very unlikely. It's normally found in larger water systems servicing communal schemes and blocks of flats rather than systems for individual homes.

Managing legionella

We flush water systems in our homes before you move in to make sure there is no legionella present. For any properties with large shared water systems, such as an independent living scheme or a block of flats, we have risk assessments and monitoring procedures in place.

What you can do

There are some steps you can take to reduce the risk of legionella bacteria growing in your home.

Setting the right temperature

Legionella bacteria are more likely to grow between 20°C and 45°C. Ensure that you set your hot water cylinder or boiler to at least 60°C or above. Regularly running your cold water tap should also ensure temperatures stay below 20°C.

Taps, showers and hose pipes

Legionella bacteria can grow and multiply on scale or rust. So descale taps and showers every three months or when there is an obvious build-up of scale. The harder the water in your area, the more frequently you should descale.

Clean the taps in your bath, basin and sink by brushing the scale off with a nylon brush or wiping them with a diluted bleach solution. You can also use any descaling solution that you can buy from hardware shops.

Soak the shower head and flexible hose in a disinfectant solution every three months to make sure any build-up of bacteria is eradicated.

Prevent the shower head from becoming immersed in water by using the restraining rings provided.

Use taps once a week

This helps to make sure you don't have water standing still in pipes, and if you have been away for more than a week, you should run all your taps for a few minutes before using the water.

You will also need to run the water in your shower. Put the shower head in the bath or shower tray and run the shower for five minutes.

Remember to include any garden hose taps.

Plumbing

If you do any plumbing work on your property, use Water Regulations Advisory Scheme (WRAS) approved products that won't contaminate water.

Flush away those bacteria

The water in your home is more likely to have legionella if you haven't used it for a while.

So if you have been away for more than a week, this is what you should do:

- Heat up your water system to the normal temperature
- Run every tap for at least five minutes
- Slowly flush the cold taps until the water is really cold.

Hose pipes should be removed from the tap when not in use and should be stored out of direct sunlight to keep the temperature of the remaining water as low as possible.

Remember that when flushing taps or other outlets open them slowly, so you don't splash water or release water droplets in the air.

Other ways we can help

Please contact us if you have any concerns about legionella or water safety. We also have lots of useful information about home safety on our website.

You may also be interested in

- Fire safety
- Electrical safety
- Gas safety
- Asbestos
- How we are performing – compliance and health and safety.

Get in touch

The quickest way to get in touch is online at www.progressgroup.org.uk by:

- Logging into your online tenant account
- Emailing us
- Live chat – available Monday to Friday, 8am to 5pm.

You can also:

- Call us on 0333 320 4555
- Visit or write to us - Sumner House, 21 King Street, Leyland, Lancashire, PR25 2LW.

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Log in or sign up for your online tenant account at www.progressgroup.org.uk

Complaints and compliments

Your feedback is very important to us and helps us to improve our services. If you want to tell us that we have been doing something well or are unhappy about something, please tell us using the contact details on the left.

Our Complaints Policy and process follow the standards set out in the Housing Ombudsmen's Complaint Handling Code. You can read more on our website or let us know if you would like a leaflet.

Information in another format or language

This leaflet is available in the following formats:

- EasyRead
- Audio
- Large print
- Braille
- Other languages.

More information is available at www.progressgroup.org.uk/access