



Legionella

Health and Safety Guidance

Table of Contents

Legionella.....	2
What is Legionella?	2
What are the symptoms?	2
How do you contract Legionella?	2
How do you prevent the formation of Legionella bacteria?.....	2
Risk Assessment:	2
Preventative Measures:.....	3
Summary	3

Legionella

What is Legionella?

Often referred to as Legionnaires' disease, Legionella is a lung infection that can be contracted by inhaling contaminated water droplets. Although uncommon, it can be very serious and potentially fatal. 604 confirmed legionella cases were reported in 2023. The age distribution of cases is markedly skewed toward individuals aged over 60, who remain the most affected demographic¹.

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS?

Symptoms of Legionella disease is similar to pneumonia and may include:

- A cough
- Difficulty breathing
- Chest pain
- A high temperature
- Flu-like symptoms

If you experience any of these symptoms, it is advisable to seek medical advice.

How do you contract Legionella?

Legionella bacteria are commonly found in natural water sources, rivers and lakes etc. Reports of people becoming ill from such sources are rare, as it is highly unlikely the conditions for the bacteria to grow to a level where it becomes a significant risk. It is far more likely the right conditions exist to encourage bacterial growth in purpose-built water systems where water is maintained at temperatures ranging between 20-45°C. Such purpose-built systems may include evaporative condensers, hot and cold-water systems.

Contaminated water droplets or water in an aerosol form needs to be inhaled into the lungs for you to become infected. While anyone can contract Legionella, some are more susceptible than others and may include:

- People over 45 years of age.
- Smokers and heavy drinkers.
- People suffering from chronic respiratory or kidney disease, diabetes, lung, and heart disease.
- Those with a suppressed immune system.

HOW DO YOU PREVENT THE FORMATION OF LEGIONELLA BACTERIA?

RISK ASSESSMENT:

First and foremost, conduct a risk assessment. This is a legal requirement if you operate a premises that is likely to expose people to the risk of legionella. The risk assessment must be performed by a competent person and may require a Legionella survey, again this should also be conducted by a competent person. Your survey and risk assessment should encompass high-risk areas, as hot water

¹ Source: UK Health Security Agency

storage tanks, showers, irrigation tanks, irrigation supply pipes, and water butts, among others. It should identify:

- water storage or re-circulation within your system
- the water temperature within the system falling between 20–45°C
- there are sources of nutrients such as rust, sludge, scale, and organic matter.
- the conditions are likely to encourage bacteria to multiply.
- The system has conditions that allow water to stagnate, e.g., storage tanks, dead legs (a delivery pipe with a dead end).
- It is possible for water droplet to be produced and if so, can they be delivered over a wide area, e.g., showers and aerosols.
- It is likely your employees, visitors, club members, etc., are more susceptible to infection due to age, illness, or a weakened immune system etc, and they could be exposed to contaminated water droplets.

Having conducted a risk assessment if you decide that the risks are insignificant and are being properly managed, your assessment is complete. You will not need to take any further action, but it is important to review your assessment periodically in case anything changes in your system.

PREVENTATIVE MEASURES:

If your risk assessment identifies areas needing improvement, consider what preventative measures would be suitable for you. These may include:

- Flushing – periodically flushing the system. The higher-the risk, the more frequent the flushing requirements.
- Where the system has not been used for a considerable period and the flushing regime has not been maintained, purging the water system is recommended.
- Clean the system to remove sludge, scale, or organic matter.
- Where reasonably practicable, remove all dead legs and replace any rusted components.
- Chemical treatment of the water system if identified by the risk assessment.
- Monitoring/testing for Legionella if specified in the risk assessment.

Maintain records of inspections, water treatments, control regimes, and risk assessments. Always seek competent advice.

SUMMARY

If you control a premises with a water system (hot or cold), you must assess the risk of Legionella and depending on the outcome, put in place suitable controls to prevent the build-up of legionella bacteria.

If you share a clubhouse, determine who is responsible for conducting the risk assessment.

Seeking assistance from a competent person or professional company is highly recommended.

If your club's water systems have been dormant for a significant period of time, say over the winter period, then you are at a higher risk of harbouring legionella bacteria. A complete flush of your water systems is highly recommended.

Follow the guidance [here](#).

A brief guide for duty holders can be found [here](#).

IT IS HIGHLY RECOMMENDED YOU GET ASSISTANCE FROM A COMPETENT
PERSON I.E., A PROFESSIONAL COMPANY.