

Clean, safe water in the places you live

Keeping water systems clean and safe is part of how we protect your health – and your home. This factsheet explains the two main types of bacteria we monitor for in domestic and communal water systems:

- **Legionella**, which can lead to serious illness such as Legionnaires' disease.
- **Pseudomonas Aeruginosa**, which can cause infections in some circumstances.

We also share how you can help prevent these bacteria from spreading in your own home – especially in bathrooms and kitchens, where moisture can allow them to grow.

What is Legionella?

Legionella bacteria occur naturally in rivers and lakes, but can grow in hot and cold-water systems, especially if water is left standing or temperatures are not high enough.

Legionella multiplies between 20-45°C and is killed at 60°C or higher. It can be found in:

- Taps and showers.
- Water tanks and pipes.
- Whirlpools and decorative fountains.

Exposure happens when you breathe in **aerosols** – fine water droplets released by running taps, showers, or flushing toilets. You can't catch Legionella from drinking water or other people.

What is Pseudomonas aeruginosa?

P. aeruginosa is another type of bacteria commonly found in soil and water. It thrives in **moist environments**, including:

- Taps, showers, sinks, drains.
- Shower mats, cloths, sponges, flannels.
- Bathroom fixtures and humid areas.

In healthy people, it may cause minor skin or ear infections (like swimmer's ear). But in people with weakened immune systems, it can lead to serious or even life-threatening infections, particularly in healthcare settings.

Who is at risk?

You may be more vulnerable to infection from these bacteria if you:

- Are over 45 years old.
- Smoke or drink heavily.
- Have a respiratory condition or weakened immune system.
- Have been recently hospitalised.

Signs and symptoms

Legionella

- Flu-like symptoms: High fever, chills, muscle aches, cough.
- In serious cases: pneumonia, confusion, or diarrhoea.

P. aeruginosa

- Infections of the lungs, skin, ears, or urinary tract.
- Increased coughing, tiredness, or mucus in vulnerable people.

If your doctor diagnoses either condition, **contact us immediately** so we can assess and treat your water system.

What we do to keep water safe

In schemes where we manage communal water systems, we:

- Carry out regular risk assessments.
- Put in control measures such as temperature regulation and routine flushing.
- Monitor and respond to any signs of contamination.

We work with qualified contractors to keep communal plumbing and water outlets compliant and safe.

What you can do at home

You play an important role in keeping water systems safe in your own home – especially taps, showers, and bathroom spaces. Here's how:

General precautions

- Keep **hot water cylinders at 60°C** (we may use thermostatic valves to control scalding).
- Regularly **descale and disinfect shower heads and hoses** (at least every 3 months).
- Clean tap nozzles and spray inserts.
- Run all taps and showers for 2 minutes if returning after a **week or more away**.
- Flush the toilet (with lid down) after absences.
- Report water that looks rusty or smells unusual.

Bathroom hygiene

- Clean your shower mat, bath mat, and towels regularly.
- Never hang wet items over taps or shower heads.
- Use a clean cloth when wiping taps – avoid cross- contamination from toilet surfaces.

- Rinse fruit, veg, and salad before eating.
- Sterilise reusable water bottles with boiling water.

Bathrooms are **high-risk places** for bacteria. Daily steam, flushing and damp conditions can allow mould and bacteria to grow if hygiene is not maintained.

For leaseholders and shared owners

If you own a share of your home, you're responsible for keeping taps, showers and internal water outlets clean and free from limescale.

However, if your home is connected to a **communal water system** (for example, a shared tank or plant room), we are responsible for managing water safety in those shared systems. We carry out risk assessments and introduce control measures as required.

For advice on maintaining your outlets, cleaning routines, or understanding your responsibilities, feel free to contact us.

Trusted information

For guidance on legionella:

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/legionnaires>

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Our values in practice

Clean water is essential to safe, independent living – and it's part of how we maintain the quality of our homes and services.

Through regular checks and clear advice, we work in partnership with residents to manage risks, prevent harm, and keep our places well looked after. We're committed to doing our part – and helping you do yours – to protect your health, wellbeing and home.