

#Legionella #stay safe

## How to minimise your home's risk from Legionella Bacteria

If you have been away from your home for longer than a week, the water in your domestic water system won't have moved for some time. As the weather gets warmer, this static water can become tepid – creating the perfect conditions for Legionella bacteria which causes Legionnaires' disease. When you do return home, there are some simple precautions you can take to protect the members of your household before you start using your water system for any purpose.



### How can I tell if my water system is infected?

You can't. Not without special testing equipment. But you can flush through your water system to minimise the risk. BUT you must do this with care, minimising the amount of spray created when flushing, so you don't breathe in any tiny water droplets containing Legionella bacteria – this is how the disease begins.

### How should I flush my water system?

Step one - the toilet: Put the toilet seat down and flush several times without lifting the lid. Then clean your toilet as normal using bleach. Flush again with the lid down.

Step two – cold taps: Stand well back, face turned away from the tap, and turn the cold tap on gently. Try to avoid splashing. TIP: Use a sandwich bag over the tap nozzle to prevent water spray and help direct water to the drain.



Let a mains-fed tap run for 2 minutes, then turn it off.

If your cold tap is fed from a water tank, let the tap run for 5 minutes, then turn it off.

Step three – hot taps: let each hot tap run for 5 minutes, then turn off.

Step four – showers: If a shower has not been used for a week or more, immerse the head of the shower in a basin or bath of water and turn on the shower, letting the water run for 2-3 minutes. Clean and disinfect the shower head and hose thoroughly before using again.



Step five – water jugs, coffee machines and kettles: Clean your water jug thoroughly and change the filter. Clean coffee machine water tanks thoroughly before using. Empty and rinse the kettle. Boil once then discard the water before using again as normal.

Step six – outdoor taps: Run outside taps for at least 5 minutes before using, to ensure any stagnant water lying in the pipework is cleared.

Step seven – rain butts: Be very careful before using water from a rain butt that has been standing for weeks in the sun, as Legionella bacteria thrives in warm water. Play it safe by adding some form of sanitiser. Ensure that no spray is created when using water from a rain butt and never connect a hose pipe or pressure washer.



Step eight – hot tubs: If not used for a while hot tubs should be emptied and refilled. Add water treatment chemicals and put the hot tub through a cleaning cycle. Make sure the water is always regularly tested and treated.

Step nine – ponds, pools and paddling pools: Empty and refill paddling pools every couple of days. During lockdown, people have been tempted to create makeshift swimming pools, either by enlarging ponds, or digging new holes. These are new sources of tepid, static water. Empty any

‘unofficial’ pools and don’t use them again.

### **Why should I be concerned about Legionella?**

Legionella bacteria is the cause of Legionnaires Disease, a ‘flu like illness which can be really debilitating. Unlike Coronavirus, it cannot be spread from person to person, but just like COVID-19, it can prove fatal for the frail, the elderly, and those with underlying health conditions. The death rate among those who get Legionnaires Disease is around 12%.

The last thing we need as a nation, either for our families, or for the NHS to cope with, is a series of outbreaks of Legionnaire’s Disease.



**#LEGIONELLA #STAYSAFE**