Dangers from Legionella in Domestic Hot and Cold Water Systems

Although we would stress that there is no cause for alarm, as a precautionary measure, we must highlight the possible dangers from legionella. We have provided this information to advise you on how best to minimise any risk of infection.

What is Legionella?

- Legionella is a bacteria that can live in domestic hot and cold water pipes and tanks
- The bacteria can survive low temperatures and grows rapidly at temperatures between 20°C and 45°C. They are killed at higher temperatures and this is the main method used for their control in domestic water systems.
- Legionnaires’ disease is a pneumonia-like illness caused by the bacteria.
- Although the dangers of legionella problems being present in frequently used domestic hot and cold water systems is not as high as in larger scale water systems, it should not be ignored.

How can legionnaires’ disease be caught?

- The infection is caused by breathing in water droplets or spray-mists which have been contaminated by the bacteria. Those most at risk include elderly people, smokers and those suffering from long-term illness.
- It is not contracted through drinking contaminated water and cannot be passed from person to person.

What can residents do to reduce the risk from Legionella?

- If your house has a hot water tank make sure that the water temperature is set at a minimum of 60°C on the tank thermostat, If you need help or advice on doing this please contact our Customer Service Team on 01592 630922.
- Regularly run all cold water taps for at least 2 minutes to flush them out. For hot water taps and showers make sure they run at full temperature for at least 2 minutes. For little used taps this should be done weekly.
- Regularly clean your shower head and hose, if you have one, with a mild disinfectant solution.
- If you have a shower or hot water taps that are seldom used, bath taps for example if you normally use only the shower, please contact us for further advice on how to make them safe.
- If your house is going to be unoccupied for more than two weeks at anytime, and particularly in the summer, drain down your water system and refill it on your return. If you need help or advice on doing this please contact us in advance of your holiday.
- By following these basic rules you will minimise any risk to you and those in your household from legionella.