

Legionella

A positive Legionella count has been identified in your buildings water supply – what does this mean?

What is Legionella?

Legionella is a naturally occurring bacteria which is found in water in the environment. It flourishes in conditions where temperatures are between 25-45°C both in the open water and in places such as water systems in buildings.

The Legionella bacteria is responsible for causing Pontiac Fever and Legionnaires disease in vulnerable people (the elderly and unwell) and that is why it is important for us maintain the water system in your building to prevent it multiplying and reaching harmful levels. To make sure the maintenance is working, we need to carry out periodic checks to ensure that there are no harmful levels of Legionella bacteria in the system.

Please remember this infection only happens when you breathe in small droplets of water from a spray/shower/aerosol which contain the bacteria. Healthy people usually do not develop any illness.

What does a positive Legionella count in the water supply mean?

Firstly, there is no need to panic.

NHS Property Services will already have a plan in place to deal with any risk identified.

In the descriptions to the right, we refer to 'cfu' which means 'colony forming units' and this is the measure used when testing water samples.

If the result is not detected or less than 100 cfu

There is no need for alarm. Essentially the system is under control. However, in premises where the primary concern is to protect susceptible patients we will always investigate any positive legionella counts. This may include having the system resampled to assist in deciding what may need to be done or if it is satisfactory to continue to monitor. We will keep you informed.

If the result is >100 up to 1000 cfu, and only a few of the samples taken show a positive result

Then we will resample the system. If similar results are found again, then a full investigation into the control measures in place will be carried out to identify any remedial action required.

If most of the samples are showing a positive result, there will be an immediate review of control measures and a full investigation of the control measure and water system will be carried out.

If these levels are found in a Tier 1 or Tier 2 site then we will consult with the tenant's Infection, Prevention and Control Team (IPCT) to determine if the outlets are required to be taken out of use whilst any agreed remedial actions are undertaken.

If the result is >1000 cfu

The system will be resampled and there will be an immediate review of control measures and a full investigation of the control measures and water system completed. In these cases, the system will be disinfected and further water samples will be taken three days after the disinfection and then at regular intervals until we are assured that the water system is back under control.

If these levels are found in Tier 1 or Tier 2 sites we will contact the tenant's Infection, Prevention and Control Team (IPCT) immediately to ensure that they can consider patient susceptibility and whether outlets should be taken out of use or fitted with filters during work to resolve the issue.