



# Water hygiene in your home

Advice and information



**watford**  
community  
housing

Along with your water provider, Affinity Water, we are responsible for making sure that the water in your home is clean and safe.

There are also lots of things you can do to help keep your water fresh and hygienic.

# What's in water?

All water systems in your home naturally contain bacteria and other organisms. These are generally safe but if these bacteria are left to multiply, they can cause people to become ill and in very rare cases can even become fatal.

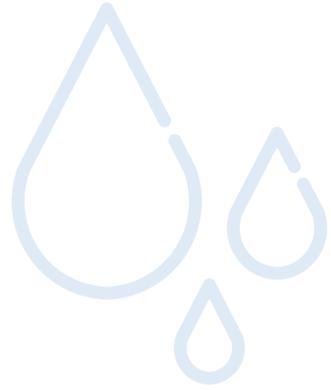
The most common bacteria is Legionella – and it is also the one that poses greatest risk. Legionella bacteria feeds on scale, rust and sludge and thrives at temperatures between 20-45°C. If small droplets of water contaminated with Legionella are inhaled, it can cause Legionnaires' disease – a form of pneumonia which can affect anyone.



# Is your home at risk from Legionella bacteria?

**The risk of Legionella in your home is very low, but in the wrong conditions this bacteria can grow in your taps and pipes, so it's a good idea to keep on top of your water hygiene.**

Certain properties, such as some blocks of flats, will have water stored in larger quantities. In these buildings, we manage this water to make sure it's safe.



## What can you do to help keep your water safe?

- If you have a hot water storage cylinder, you should store your water at between 50°C and 60°C. The thermostat on the cylinder should be set to 60°C – although you should take care to avoid scalding.
- If you're away from home for a long period of time, your water will sit in your system and the quality will worsen over time. When you get home, it's a good idea to heat the system to its normal temperature, then slowly turn on each hot water tap and shower, and run them for five minutes. Don't stay in the room or breathe in the steam while the water is running. If you have a combination boiler, your hot water goes directly to your taps and you will have very little stored water in the pipes, so a couple of minutes will do.
- If you require cold water, it is always a good idea to run the cold tap for a minute or two until they're very cold.
- You should regularly clean your taps to prevent the build-up of limescale. If you are in a hard water area this can build up very easily.
- If you have a shower you should clean the shower heads and hoses thoroughly every two or three months by removing the head and cleaning with hot water.
- If you have any taps that don't get used very often, make sure they are flushed through regularly to prevent limescale from building up.
- It's important that we are able to access your home to carry out risk assessments, as these will allow us to test the temperature and quality of your water and carry out any treatments your water system may need.
- If you have any unused taps, showers or any sections of water pipe that you don't use, let us know so that we can remove these for you.

## What do we do to keep your water safe?

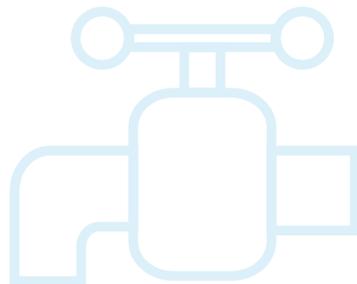
We carry out risk assessments on all of our blocks of flats every five years to identify and assess any risks. Where we find a risk, we then take action to manage and control it.

Houses are generally very low-risk, especially homes with combination boilers, but we may occasionally need to check water temperatures or take water samples for testing. Depending on the results, we may then want to clean your water system or change your piping layout to help reduce the risk of bacteria spreading.

If your boiler needs replacing, we may change this to a combination boiler to avoid the need to store water.

## Get in touch

If you have any concerns, a problem with your pipes, or you would like us to pick up old pieces of pipework you aren't using anymore, then you can let us know by calling **0800 218 2247** or emailing **[enquiries@wcht.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@wcht.org.uk)**







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