

### What is Legionnaires' disease?

Legionnaires' disease is a serious lung infection caused by legionella bacteria. It begins with flu-like symptoms, such as headaches, a high temperature and muscle pain, which develop into a persistent cough, shortness of breath and chest pain.

Legionella bacteria is usually found in low numbers in water sources such as ponds, rivers and lakes. The bacteria can rapidly multiply if they find their way into artificial water systems, such as storage tanks and pipework, especially at temperatures of between 20°C and 45°C.

People usually catch Legionnaires' disease by breathing in small droplets of contaminated water. Although the illness can affect anyone, people aged over 50, smokers, heavy drinkers and people suffering with chronic respiratory or kidney disease, or who have weak immune systems, are particularly at risk.

### What can I do to minimize the risk?

It is important to remember that the risk of contracting Legionnaires' disease is very low. However, there are some things which you can do to minimise that risk even further.

They are:

- Make sure you regularly clean your shower head
- Run your shower at full temperature for a few minutes if you have been away or haven't used it for several days
- If you have been away from home for a week or more, run the hot and cold taps for at least one minute to clear out the system before you use any water
- If you have a water tank in your loft, make sure it has a lid and is insulated. Please contact us if you need help to check or are in any doubt
- Make sure you regularly use all of the taps which are inside and outside your home, including both hot and cold taps
- Don't tamper with the maximum temperature setting of any hot water heating system installed in your property
- Make sure your boiler is serviced regularly and let us know if you notice any reduction in your hot water temperature

### What if I need help?

You can report any problems by contacting our customer services team on **01284 767224** [or email enquiries@suffolkhousing.org](mailto:enquiries@suffolkhousing.org)

