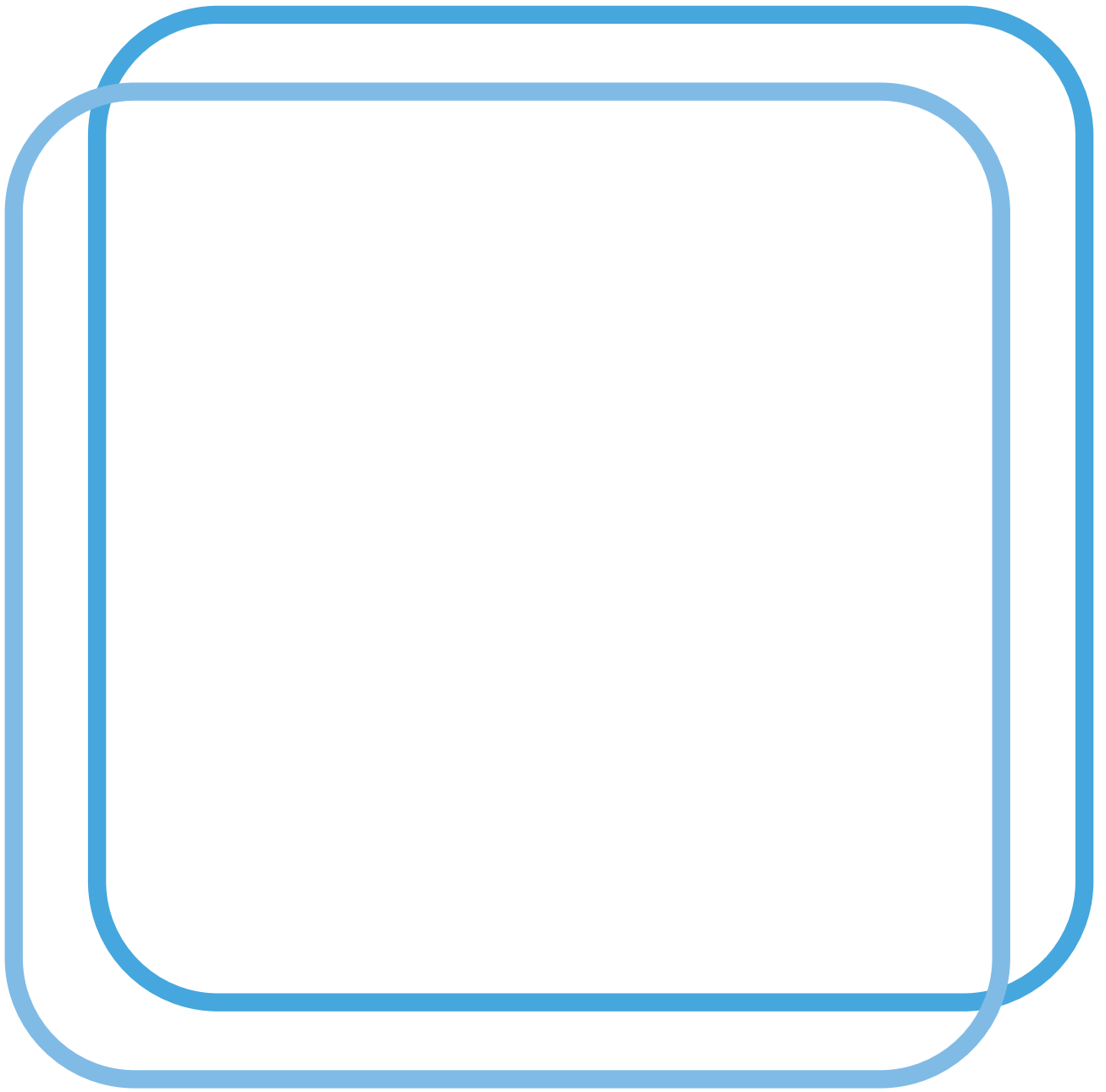


Legionnella



Legionnaires' Disease



Safer Business - Better Health

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Introduction

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| What is legionnaires' disease? | <p>Legionnaires' disease is a type of pneumonia. It was named after an outbreak of severe pneumonia which affected a meeting of the American Legion in 1976. It is an uncommon but serious disease.</p> <p>The illness occurs more frequently in men than women. It usually affects middle-aged or elderly people and more</p> | <p>commonly smokers or people with other chest problems. Legionnaires' disease is uncommon in younger people even more so under the age of 20.</p> <p>About half the cases of Legionnaires' disease are caught abroad. The other half are the result of infections acquired in the UK.</p> |
| How do people get it? | <p>The germ which causes Legionnaires' disease is a bacterium called Legionella pneumophila. People catch Legionnaires' disease by inhaling small droplets of water suspended in the air which contain the Legionella bacterium. However, most people who are exposed to</p> | <p>Legionella do not become ill. Legionnaires' disease does not spread from person to person. Most well publicised outbreaks have affected people not directly employed at the premises concerned.</p> |
| Where does it come from? | <p>The bacterium which causes legionnaires disease is widespread in nature. It mainly lives in water, for example ponds, where it does not usually cause problems.</p> <p>Outbreaks occur from purpose-built water systems where temperatures are warm enough to encourage growth of the bacteria, e.g. in cooling towers, evaporative condensers and whirlpool spas</p> | <p>(trade name Jacuzzi) and from water used for domestic purposes in buildings such as hotels, residential care homes etc.</p> <p>Most community outbreaks in the UK have been linked to installations such as cooling towers or evaporative condensers which can spread droplets of water over a wide area. These are found as part of some air-conditioning and industrial cooling systems.</p> |

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| <p>What measures are there to control Legionnaires' disease?</p> | <p>To prevent the occurrence of Legionnaires' disease, companies which operate these systems must comply with regulations requiring them to manage,</p> | <p>maintain and treat them properly. Amongst other things, this means that the water must be treated and the system cleaned regularly.</p> |
| <p>What are the symptoms?</p> | <p>The symptoms of Legionnaires' disease are similar to the symptoms of the flu:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • high temperature, feverishness and chills • cough | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • muscle pains • headache; and leading on to • pneumonia, very occasionally • diarrhoea and signs of mental confusion |
| <p>How is it treated?</p> | <p>The illness is treated with an antibiotic called erythromycin or a similar antibiotic.</p> | |
| <p>What do I do if a member of my staff is suspected of contracting Legionnaire's disease</p> | <p>If a member of your staff develop the above symptoms and are worried that it might be Legionnaires' disease, recommend they see their GP.</p> <p>Because it is similar to the flu, it is not always easy to diagnose. A blood or urine test will be helpful in deciding whether an illness is or is not Legionnaires' disease. When doctors are aware that the illness is present in the local community, they have a much</p> | <p>better chance of diagnosing it earlier.</p> <p>If it is suspected that the illness is a consequence of work then contact your enforcing authority (HSE/Local Authority) and your health & safety representative / occupational health nurse.</p> <p>There is a legal requirement for employers to report cases of Legionnaires' disease that may be acquired at their premises to the enforcing authority.</p> |
| <p>What are my legal duties?</p> | <p>The legal duties listed below are required under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act, the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations and the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify and assess sources of risk - this includes checking whether conditions are present which will encourage bacteria to multiply, eg. is the water temperature between 20-45 degrees centigrade and is there a means of creating and disseminating breathable droplets, e.g. the aerosol created by a shower or cooling tower; and assess if there are susceptible people who may be exposed to the | <p>contaminated aerosols</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • prepare a scheme for preventing or controlling the risk • implement, manage and monitor precautions - if control measures are to remain effective, then regular monitoring of the systems and the control measures is essential. Monitoring of general bacterial numbers through sampling will indicate whether microbiological control is being achieved. • keep records of the precautions taken • appoint a person to be managerially responsible. |

Legionnaires Checklist

This checklist has been designed as an aid to help you in assessing your legionella hazards within your business and premises under your control. This can be used in conjunction with the general risk assessment sheet to help identify possible hazards.

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| Name of business: | |
| Nature of business: | |
| Address: | |
| Name of person completing: | Date: |

| Stage One | Yes | No |
|---|-----|----|
| Are conditions right for the bacteria to multiply, e.g. is the water temperature between 20°C and 45 °C? | | |
| Are there areas where stagnant water occurs (dead legs), e.g. pipes to a shower that is no longer used? | | |
| Are there infrequently used outlets, e.g. showers, taps? | | |
| Is there debris in the system, such as rust, sludge or scale (often a problem in old metal cisterns), that could provide food for growing legionella? | | |
| Are there thermostatic mixing valves that set a favourable outlet temperature for legionella growth? | | |
| Are any of your employees, residents, visitors etc vulnerable to infection, e.g. older people or those already ill? | | |

If you answer yes to any of these questions there is an increased risk of people being exposed to legionella and falling ill.

Should you decide that these risks are insignificant simply review your risk assessment periodically.

If you identify significant risks you should introduce proper controls, which could include disinfection of the system - you should refer to the Approved Code of Practice for Legionnaires' disease ISBN 0 7176 1772 6.

As the design, maintenance and operation of the system are crucial in controlling the growth of legionella any action you take is likely to include the following:

Ensuring water cannot stagnate anywhere in the system, e.g. remove redundant pipe work, run taps/showers in unoccupied rooms regularly

Keeping water cisterns covered, insulated, clean and free of debris

Insulating pipe work

Maintaining the correct temperature at the calorifier (i.e. the hot water cylinder)

Advising maintenance staff working on the system about the risks and how to minimise them

If you are a landlord advising tenants about the risks, the control measures you are taking and the precautions they can take.

Avoiding long periods of non-use by regularly flushing through showers etc.

NOTE

- Raising the temperature of your warm water is one way to control legionella growth, but could also increase the risk of burns and scalding. You will need to consider points like these when you do your risk assessment and decide which control measures to use
- This checklist has been produced to start you thinking of what hazards/controls you have at the premise. The list is not exhaustive and there may be hazards/controls that have not been covered.