

Minimising the risks of Legionella bacteria and Legionnaires disease in care homes

All water systems used in care homes may be a source of a number of pathogens including Legionella bacteria which can cause a serious lung infection called Legionnaires disease.

Infection is usually from breathing in small droplets of contaminated water and the infection is not contagious from person to person. Groups more susceptible to developing the infection include the frail and elderly. Care home must ensure that there are measures in place to minimise the risk.

Water systems assessment

Care homes have a legal responsibility to have their water systems assessed by a competent assessor. The assessment should be reviewed regularly and, in any case, when there is reason to believe that the original assessment may no longer be valid.

The risk assessment should include a prepared scheme for the prevention or control of legionella risk and records should be kept of all assessments, implementations, management and monitoring from the scheme.

Further information can be found via:

NHS Choices website

Practical advice and information on the health and safety responsibilities and legislation can be found via the Health and Safety Executive website:

www.hse.gov.uk/legionnaires