



Infection Prevention Team Newsletter July 2024

Water-borne infections

Some bacteria thrive in damp conditions or can be carried in water, warmer conditions in the summer months can encourage these bacteria to multiply and spread rapidly and it is important that basic infection prevention and cleaning measures are maintained to reduce the risk of infections from these bugs, some of which can potentially be fatal.

Legionella

The bacteria which causes Legionnaires disease loves still water and thrives in unused pipes and other outlets such as air- conditioning pipework, dehumidifiers, hot tubs and even hosepipes. Legionnaires disease is caught when tiny water droplets, carrying the bacteria, are inhaled through the mouth or nose. Elderly people and those with chronic health conditions are the most vulnerable to Legionella. To reduce the risk of infection it is essential that any unused outlets (sinks, baths, etc), often referred to as 'dead legs' are removed as soon as possible. In the meantime, rarely used outlets must be frequently flushed (allowing water to run through the tap(s) for at least 10 minutes every week. Water services should be operated at temperatures that prevent Legionella growth:

- Hot water storage cylinders (calorifiers) should store water at 60°C or higher
- Hot water should be distributed at 50°C or higher (thermostatic mixer valves need to be fitted as close as possible to outlets, where a scald risk is identified).
- Cold water should be stored and distributed below 20°C.

Pseudomonas Aeruginosa

Pseudomonas bacteria (a smelly green bug often seen in stale water in neglected flower vases) can cause unpleasant wound infections and also chest and urinary tract infections which can even lead to sepsis. It is commonly found in sink plugholes/ drains, overflows and taps, it thrives in the biofilm of moisture-loving bacteria which can build up in these areas however, we can help to reduce the risk of this bug taking hold by adhering to the following sink-safety guidance. Hand washing facilities should:

1. only be used for the purpose of hand washing;
2. NOT be used for disposal of any body fluids; and
3. be cleaned in a manner that minimises the contamination of the faucet (tap) from organisms in the sink trap (via plug hole or overflow).

Tablet soap and even liquid soap can also support the growth of pseudomonas, this is why disposable cartridge style liquid soap dispensers should be available for handwashing.

LINKS: [IPC Policies and Procedures](#) (scroll down) [Free IPC training online](#)

We are always here to help- email us at IPC@westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk