



Important information for dental practices

A safe water supply for your team and your patients

What is the risk?

During the COVID-19 lockdown, many dental practices have had to close to protect public health and reduce the spread of the virus. However, as restrictions are lifted it is important to ensure that public health continues to be protected.

A potential health risk relates to Legionella in water systems that have not been used during the lockdown period. Stagnant water systems will result in bacterial growth, especially in warmer weather.

Legionella, which is naturally present in water systems, causes Legionnaires' disease which is fatal in 10% of cases.

What is the advice for dental practices?

Managers of dental practices have a duty of care within the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 which includes regularly updating their Water Safety Plan in line with HSG274 Part 2 (2014).

Dental premises are required to have a **written scheme in accordance** with HTM 01-05, HTM 04-01, ACOP L8 (2013) and the HSE HSG274 Part 2 (2014) and a **Legionella risk assessment** for the control of Legionella in accordance with the ACOP L8 (2013).

Practices should ensure:

- the practice's Water Safety Plan is implemented for the control of Legionella within the dental unit water lines before, during and after shutdown during COVID-19 in line with HTM 01-05, HTM 04-01, ACOP L8 (2013) and the HSE HSG274 Part 2 (2014).
- there is regular flushing, or treatment programmes based on equipment and manufacturer's guidance, throughout the shutdown period. This may be done by practice staff if they have the necessary skills and knowledge.
- there is a plan to recommission all water services before re-opening, including disinfection, flushing and validation. If a water system requires disinfection, then a water consultant may be needed.
- all water systems and equipment that use water are reviewed for safe decommissioning and recommissioning.
- actions are documented during decommissioning and recommissioning phases to demonstrate regulatory compliance regarding Legionella.





Resources for dental practices:

- **Health Technical Memorandum 01-05 (2013): Decontamination in primary care dental practices (Chapter 19)**
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/170689/HTM_01-05_2013.pdf
- **Health Technical Memorandum 04-01 (2017)**
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/hot-and-cold-water-supply-storage-and-distribution-systems-for-healthcare-premises>
- **Summary of managing legionella in dental practices during COVID-19**
https://www.yorksandhumberdeanery.nhs.uk/sites/default/files/summary_of_managing_legionella_in_dental_practice_covid-19_v1.3_07.05.20.pdf
- **Management of waterborne pathogens in dental care during the COVID-19 pandemic**
<https://www.legionellacontrol.org.uk/data/pdf/Advice-for-Dental-Surgeries-120420-v01.0-2.pdf>

Advice and support also available:

- **Health and Safety Executive (HSE) ACOP L8 (2013)**
<https://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/books/l8.htm>
- **HSG 274 Part 2 (2014)**
<https://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/priced/hsg274part2.pdf>
<https://www.hse.gov.uk/news/legionella-risks-during-coronavirus-outbreak.htm>
<https://www.hse.gov.uk/legionnaires/what-you-must-do.htm>
- **NHS (medical advice if you think you may have Legionnaires' Disease)**
<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/legionnaires-disease/>
or you can call 111
- **Public Health England (PHE)**
<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/legionnaires-disease-guidance-data-and-analysis>
- **Local council environmental health teams**
<https://www.gov.uk/find-local-council>

Expertise and support is available from PHE's Food, Water and Environmental (FW&E) Microbiology Services. This includes:

- access to laboratory services
- provision of expert advice
- expert assistance in investigation and control

Based in three sites across the country PHE's specialist laboratories can offer a microbiology testing service to meet the needs of those who require support.

All FW&E laboratories are accredited through the United Kingdom Accreditation Services (UKAS) to ISO 17025:2017 and have 'Official Control' status.

Other bacterial contaminants may cause risk to public health as well as Legionella. PHE is happy to be contacted for advice about these and any other concerns you may have relating to water safety.

To find out about how PHE can help you please contact:

- **Food, Water & Environment Microbiology Services, for advice on water safety:**
FWELabs@phe.gov.uk
- **Dental Public Health Team, for advice on dental public health:**
dentalpublichealth@PHE.gov.uk

Public Health England is an executive agency of the UK Department of Health and Social Care, which is responsible for protecting and improving the nation's health and wellbeing and reducing health inequalities