



## Important information

For all organisations  
that rely on a safe  
water supply to  
undertake their  
business activities

### What is the risk?

During the COVID-19 lockdown, many businesses have had to close to protect public health and reduce the spread of the virus. However, as businesses start to consider re-opening, 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 lock down period.

Buildings should have in place a risk assessment and a Water Safety Plan, but dormant 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. This can be avoided by following appropriate advice.

### Who needs to take action?

- **dental practices**
- **hair dressers**
- **hotels**
- **gyms**
- **sports clubs**
- **office buildings (especially those with shower facilities)**
- **any organisation that has a water supply and is currently shut down**

### What action will reduce the risk?

Regular flushing of the premises water system throughout the shut down period is required. However, all aspects of the water management system need to be reviewed before re-opening the business, and necessary action will be dependent on the complexities of the system. This may be done by a combination of workers employed by the organisation if they have the necessary skills and knowledge. However, if a water system requires disinfection then a water consultant will be needed.





**Expertise and support is available from PHE's Food, Water and Environmental 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 our specialist laboratories can offer a microbiology testing service to meet the needs of those who require our 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. We are happy to be contacted for advice about these and any other concerns you may have relating to water safety.

**Advice and support is also available from the following organisations:**

- **Health and Safety Executive (HSE)**  
<https://www.hse.gov.uk/news/legionella-risks-during-coronavirus-outbreak.htm>  
<https://www.hse.gov.uk/legionnaires/what-you-must-do.htm>  
<https://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg458.pdf>
- **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>
- **ESGLI Guidance for managing Legionella in water systems during the COVID-19 pandemic**  
[https://www.esamid.org/fileadmin/src/media/PDFs/3Research\\_Projects/ESGLI/COVId\\_buidling\\_water\\_system\\_guidance\\_27\\_3\\_20\\_v4\\_DS.pdf](https://www.esamid.org/fileadmin/src/media/PDFs/3Research_Projects/ESGLI/COVId_buidling_water_system_guidance_27_3_20_v4_DS.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>

**To find out about how we can help you please contact:**

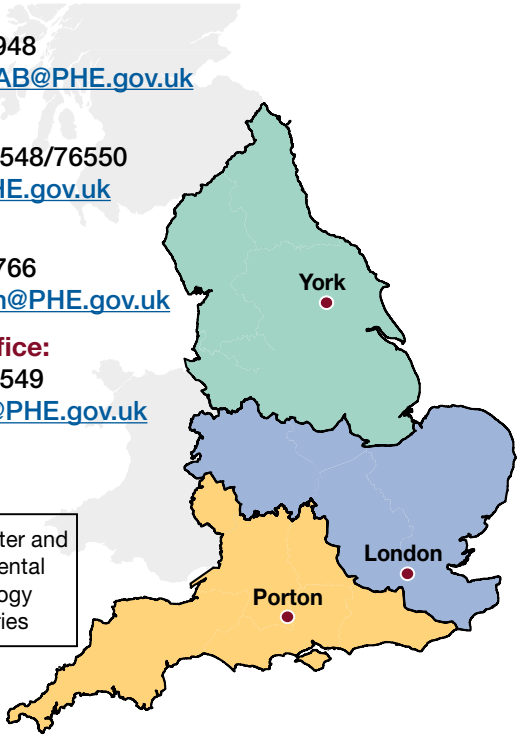
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• Food, Water and Environmental Microbiology Laboratories



**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**