



Creating communities,
empowering lives

Customer Safety Booklet





Keeping you safe in your home

We're committed to keeping you safe in your home. There's a lot we do, and can support you with, to ensure your safety from gas safety to damp and mould.

At Abri we undertake a range of measures to ensure that your home is safe.

All blocks of flats have an independent fire safety assessment, supplemented by monthly inspections by our staff, including a visual check of fire safety arrangements. Additional fire risk inspections are undertaken by our dedicated Fire Risk Assessment Estate Wardens.

We fit smoke alarms for free and we are steadily replacing battery smoke alarms with mains powered alarms.

We service your gas boiler annually and make sure it is safe – when we do this we will also test your smoke alarm. If you do not have a gas boiler in your home a trades operative will test your smoke alarm when routine repairs are undertaken.

We will undertake a Fire Risk Assessment where front doors open on to a communal corridor – this identifies where people have left rubbish and obstacles in communal areas that could act as fuel for fire or obstruct escape routes.

We will service and maintain fire alarms and equipment where they are installed in communal areas.

Access is important!

Abri requires access to your home to carry out these vital checks to the electrical installation, gas appliances and gas installation, and access to flat front doors for your safety and legal compliance. Please also ensure that there is credit on all utilities (Gas and Electricity) so that this work can be carried out.

Electrical

Abri will complete an Electrical Installation Condition Report (EICR) on a 5 yearly basis at your property, or on commencement of the rental of a new property.

What is an EICR (Electrical installation condition report)?

An EICR is an Electrical Installation Condition Report, a document that assesses the condition of your electrical installation, Abri has a policy that sets out our statutory obligations and compliance with the requirements for electrical safety by complying with BS7671 IET wiring regulations (18th Edition) & the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974.

We will ensure properties are maintained in a safe condition by undertaking the appropriate periodic inspection and testing.

Inspection and testing at a frequency of five years for domestic properties. Abri has all their properties within a 5-year cycle and have a robust programme in place.



This is intended to:

- Help keep you and your family safe by making sure your electrical installation is safe for continued use.
- Identify any potential electrical hazards in your home and repair as required.
- Highlight any areas where the electrical installation is not up to current standards
- Helps identify any future electrical upgrades needed

An EICR is a requirement of Abri electrical safety policy, and it's also a good idea if you own your home to have one in place.

It's important to have an EICR carried out on your electrical installation every five years, or sooner if you have any concerns about the safety of your electrical installation. An EICR is a requirement of Abri electrical safety policy, and it's also a good idea if you own your home.

Electrical Safety tips and Advice

- Never overload an extension lead by plugging in appliances that together will exceed the maximum current rating stated for the extension lead. This could cause the plug in the wall socket to overheat and possibly cause a fire.
- Only use one socket extension lead per socket and never plug an extension lead into another extension lead.
- Please use official manufacturers charger and do not leave unattended.
- If using a cable drum extension lead, it should be completely unwound to avoid overheating.
- If your electric trips, please get in contact with us to let us know.
- Electrical issues are the number one cause of household fires so please remain vigilant.
- There are no cuts or abrasions in the cable covering (sheath).
- The outer covering of the cable is gripped by the cord grip in the plug top, so that no coloured cable cores are visible from outside of the plug.
- The plug casing is not cracked, and the pins are not bent.
- There are no signs of overheating or burning, particularly at the plug and socket.
- There are no loose parts or screws.
- No part of the appliance is damaged or missing

Check regularly for the following danger signs:

- a smell of hot plastic or burning near an appliance or socket
- sparks or smoke coming from a plug or appliance.
- blackness or scorch marks around a socket or plug, or on an appliance
- damaged or frayed leads
- coloured wire inside leads showing at the plug or anywhere else.
- melted plastic on appliance casings or leads.
- fuses that blow or circuit-breakers that operate for no obvious reason.

For any repairs, contact our customer services team on 0300 123 1567 or log into your portal account and log your repair.

Gas

Gas safety for Tenants

When you move into a rented property your landlord must provide you with a Landlord's Gas Safety Record. Unchecked and badly maintained gas appliances pose a potentially lethal risk to your safety and health due to risk of fires, explosions, and carbon monoxide poisoning.

As a tenant it's important that you understand what Abri is responsible for.

What are your Abri's gas safety responsibilities?

To ensure your safety, all gas appliances and flues need to undergo an annual gas safety check – which will always be carried out by a suitably qualified Gas Safe registered engineer.

Following your annual gas safety check and receipt of your Landlord Gas Safety Record, we will provide a record of this check to you within 28 days of the gas safety check - and for new tenants, we will provide this at the start of their tenancy. As a landlord, we are only responsible to visually inspect your devices.

If you are unsure about your LGSR please contact Abri on **0300 123 1567**.

Maintenance

Abri need to make sure that all gas pipework, appliances, chimneys, and flues are kept in safe condition.

As above, Abri will also complete an annual service. In addition to this, you can keep yourself safe with the following:

- **Know the six signs of carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning** – headaches, dizziness, breathlessness, nausea, collapse, and loss of consciousness. Unsafe gas appliances can put you at risk of CO poisoning, gas leaks, fires, and explosions.
- **Check gas appliances for warning signs** that they are not working properly e.g., lazy yellow flames instead of crisp blue ones, black marks, or stains on or around the appliance and too much condensation in the room.
- **Abri will fit an audible carbon monoxide alarm.** This will alert you if there is carbon monoxide in your home. We recommend you test this to familiarise yourself with the noise.
- **Keep vents and chimneys clear.** Make sure you don't block any vents, as they are vital to ensure gas appliances burn properly, and chimneys need to be cleaned and checked regularly.
- **Use gas appliances only for their intended purpose.** Don't be tempted to use them for something they weren't meant for (e.g. using a gas cooker to heat a room).
- **Know the emergency procedure.** If you smell gas or suspect immediate danger, make sure you familiarise yourself with the emergency procedure and contact the relevant number for your UK region.





What does a gas leak smell like?

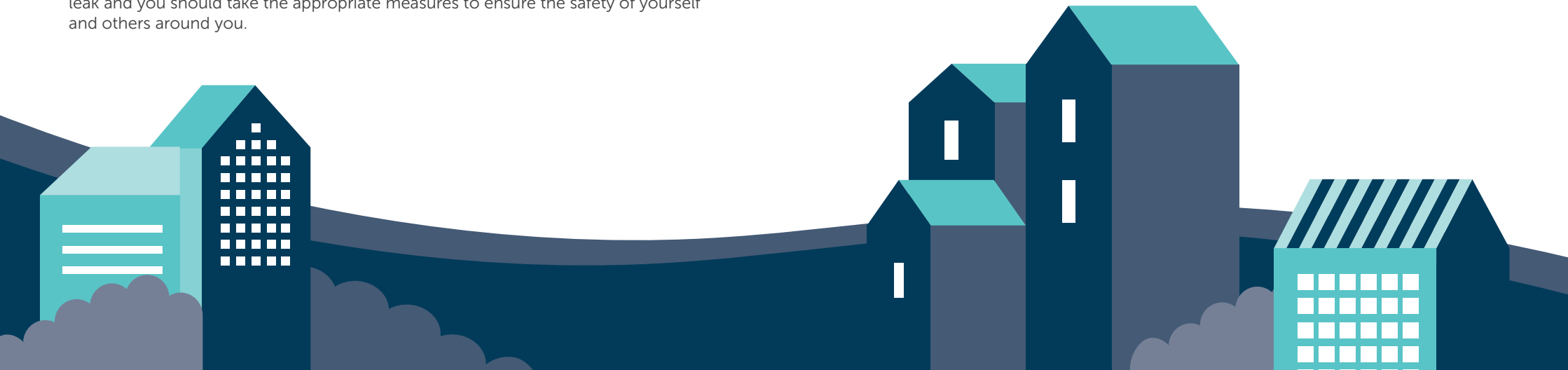
Gas is odourless in nature however the addition of mercaptan, a non-toxic and harmless artificial smell, helps to give it a unique smell to enable detection. Mercaptan gives off a strong sulphur-like smell which can be mistaken for the smell of rotten eggs. It's often this smell that is the early warning of any sort of gas leak and you should take the appropriate measures to ensure the safety of yourself and others around you.

What to do if you smell gas

It's crucial to act quickly in a gas emergency. These are the steps you need to take to stay safe:

- Get fresh air immediately; make sure you open all doors and windows to ventilate the area.
- Turn off the gas emergency control valve (also called gas emergency shut off valve) at the meter, unless the meter is located in a basement or cellar or at the LPG bulk tank or storage vessels.
- Extinguish all naked flames and don't smoke.
- Don't operate electrical switches (including turning light switches on or off) because this can ignite escaping gas.
- Contact the relevant National Gas Emergency service number on **0800 111999**
- If the attending emergency operative identifies an issue with any gas appliances, follow their advice concerning the use of the equipment. Contact Abri immediately so that we're able to investigate and complete repairs.
- If you're feeling unwell, visit your GP or hospital immediately and let them know you may have been exposed to carbon monoxide.
- Don't turn the gas supply on again until it's been checked by an Abri Gas Safe registered engineer.

Our customer services team are available in and out of hours on **0300 123 1567** or log into your portal account and log your repair.



Fire

What do I do if there is a fire? Get Out

Upon hearing the fire alarm, wherever you are in the building, you must leave via the nearest fire exit and go to a place of safety away from the building and make your way to the assembly point.

Please familiarise yourself with the fire action notices in the building.

If there is a fire in your home:

- Never tackle it yourself – get out, stay out and call 999.
- Leave the room where the fire is immediately, then close the door.
- Tell everyone in your home and get them to leave.
- Close the front door of your flat behind you.
- Wait outside, away from the building at the designated assembly point.
- Press any available manual call points when exiting the building.
- Shout 'FIRE' 'FIRE' 'FIRE' to try and alert others.
- Do not use lifts.

Plan your escape NOW.
Be prepared and don't wait until it happens.

The role of fire doors & your responsibility

In blocks of flats, most fires occur within the flats themselves. The flat entrance door prevents the spread of fire and smoke into the common parts and ensures the safety of other customers.

You have an important role to play in ensuring that, if there is a fire in your flat, the flat entrance door is an effective barrier to the spread of fire and smoke into the common parts.

Your key responsibilities are to ensure that:

- Fire doors are kept shut when not in use.
- You or your guests do not tamper with self-closing devices.
- You report any fault or damage to Abri.

Fire doors - How to check your front door?

If you suspect a fire door is faulty, there are checks you can make. If you suspect the door is faulty, please let us know.

- Check for any damage to the door and door frame and seals.
- Check the door is fitted with a self-closer mechanism.
- Check the self-closer mechanism is not damaged and the door closes flush in its frame.

Don't alter your fire door.

Where Abri are responsible for maintaining your flat front door, please report any concerns to us. Do not try to modify or repair the door yourself.

- Don't drill into your fire door or cut it in any way.
- Don't paint over the seals on a fire door.
- Do not remove or disengage any door closer mechanism.
- Do not wedge open fire doors.
- Fire doors should always remain closed.



Abri may request access to inspect your front door, we would appreciate you accommodating us, as this is a legal requirement.

Keep Clear Policy

Abri's clear corridor policy is in place to ensure that in the event of a fire, customers can evacuate safely if they need to and to enable access for the fire and rescue service.

This means that nothing should be stored or left within the communal areas. We regularly inspect these areas and any items found will be removed in line with our tort procedure.

This is also a reminder that the front door to the block remains securely closed & that you do not let people you do not know into the building.

If you are classed as vulnerable or if your personal circumstances change

If you, or anyone living with you, is classed as vulnerable or at risk that means they'd need help in the event of a fire, then you need to contact our Customer Service team who will direct you to someone that can help.

Balconies

Help us to reduce the risk of fire on your balcony, if a fire starts on your balcony, it could spread quickly, upwards, and outwards putting your home and balconies or flats above you at risk. You can reduce this risk by:

- **If you smoke, fully extinguish cigarettes using an ash tray. Cigarettes should not be dropped over the balcony.**
- **Never use BBQ's (including disposable ones) on your balcony.**
- **Remove any flammable items on your balcony that could catch fire.**
- **Keep all items to a minimum, removing rubbish and items like furniture, timber, decorating materials, and plastic toys.**
- **Nothing is to be placed on the balcony surrounds e.g. screens, fairy lights etc.**



Smoke and Heat Detection

Protecting you and your household

The easiest way to protect your home and family from fire is with a working smoke alarm. A smoke alarm can provide an early warning of a fire and allow you to make your escape – but only if it is working.

- **Test your smoke alarms weekly.**
- **Never disconnect or take the batteries out of your smoke alarm.**
- **Where Abri are responsible for repairs in your home report any concerns to us immediately.**

The Internal doors in your home will provide some protection from smoke and fire, so please ensure that you close doors at night. Keep the exit route from your flat clear so you can escape in an emergency.

You can prevent fire from happening by taking a few simple steps.

- **Don't leave cooking unattended and avoid leaving children in the kitchen alone with cooking on the hob.**
- **Be especially vigilant when cooking with oil. Don't overfill chip pans and NEVER throw water on a chip pan fire.**

- **Make sure cigarettes are put out properly, use a proper ashtray and don't smoke in bed.**
- **Don't overload electrical sockets.**
- **Turn off appliances when not in use. Don't even leave them on standby.**
- **Keep matches and lighters out of reach and sight of children.**
- **Make sure candles are secured in a proper holder and away from materials that may catch fire – like curtains. Children shouldn't be left alone with lit candles.**
- **Don't overload electrical sockets, check electrical appliance cables for signs of wear**

Check out this useful link for further information on preventing a fire:

[Fire safety in the home \(accessible version\) - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/fire-safety-in-the-home)



Asbestos

You are probably aware that over recent years the dangers of asbestos have been widely publicised. Asbestos was banned for construction purposes in 1999, therefore any property built and completed before 2000 may potentially have some form of asbestos containing materials (ACM) within the building structure.

Before we carry out any maintenance work, we will ensure that the location of any asbestos material is identified so that it can be dealt with in a safe and compliant manner. The presence of asbestos containing materials does not pose any risk to health provided they remain in good condition and are not disturbed.

We are in the process of updating our asbestos data. Therefore, you may receive contact from CASA (Abri approved surveying consultancy) to complete a management survey or re-inspection survey in the future.

Where is asbestos found?

Asbestos could be present in any building that was built or refurbished before the year 2000.

Please remember that:

- There is no need to be alarmed by the presence of asbestos.
- The proportion of asbestos in many materials identified is low.
- Where the materials remain undisturbed and in good condition, there is no risk to health.

- **Before we undertake any repair works that may disturb asbestos, we may arrange for an asbestos survey to be completed.**
- You should refer to the asbestos information before considering any basic DIY or improvement works. If you are unsure on any aspect, please contact Abri prior to starting works.

You should therefore take extra care when undertaking any basic DIY work or alterations in these areas and always liaise with Abri prior to any intrusive refurbishment works.

What is Asbestos?

Asbestos is a naturally occurring mineral fibre that was widely used in various construction materials.

Asbestos materials were often used in buildings for insulation, fire protection, reinforcement, and decorative finishes for the internal and external areas as well as the fabric of the building itself.

How long does it take for any effects of asbestos to potentially harm me?

In general, it takes between 10-30 years before signs of any asbestos related disease start to show.

Can I smell Asbestos?

No, asbestos itself does not have any aroma.

How can I keep myself safe?

Once a management survey has been completed, a copy of the survey identifying any asbestos containing materials will be available for you. Please take note of the asbestos containing materials in your property and should any of these items be damaged or deteriorate, please inform Abri immediately so the appropriate remedial works can be completed. Remedial works does not guarantee the item be removed, Abri will make the items safe and only remove the item if necessary in accordance to HSE legislation.



Asbestos can live in your property safely, here are some examples of where it may be found - if in any doubt, please contact Abri:

1. Water Tank: This is usually made of asbestos cement and is often found in older properties (pre 1980).
2. Pipe Lagging: Asbestos insulation on pipes. Used to keep heat in or cold out. Often painted over or protected by outer coating so not obviously asbestos
3. Property Insulation: Loose asbestos can be found as insulation in wall and floor cavities and in lofts.
4. Textured coating (eg artex): Can be found throughout property on ceilings and sometimes walls.
5. Soffit Board (roof overhang): Soffit board sits behind fascia at eaves level. Board can be made from asbestos cement or asbestos insulating board.
6. Toilet cistern: Toilet cisterns can contain asbestos-reinforced resin composite materials.
7. Wall Panelling: Asbestos can be found as external wall cladding and as internal wall panelling both particularly around windows.

8. Fuse box: Often found in hall or under stairs. Each fuse wire has an individual asbestos flash guard. Panel behind fuse box can be asbestos.
9. Heater Cupboard: Heater cupboard around domestic boiler often contains asbestos insulating board.

10. Floor tiles: Vinyl and thermoplastic floor tiles can contain asbestos. The tile backing may also contain asbestos paper.

11. Rainwater items: Roof gutters and down



Damp and Mould

If you live in one of our rented homes, when a report of damp and mould is made, we'll respond quickly by carrying out a mould treatment and a ventilation assessment. In all cases we will ensure that we understand the root cause of the problem and use our in-house and external specialists to quickly complete any remedial works. This may involve us working with a specialist contractor called EnviroVent to assess the extent of the problem, understand the cause, and follow any recommendations to resolve the issue. This could include mould treatment, installing new extract fans in kitchens or bathrooms or installing new whole house ventilation systems to reduce moisture.

If you own your home, you can reach out to us if you'd like more advice on how to keep your home well ventilated to come up with the best plan of action for your property.

What are the early signs of damp and mould?

Here are a few early indicators you may spot before mould growth starts to appear in your home:

- Condensation on windows and walls
- Damp areas and mould can appear on walls, especially behind furniture and in corners
- Wallpaper can start to peel
- Black mould on window frames
- Soft furnishings and fabrics become prone to mould and mildew

Tips to reduce damp in your home

We work with our specialist contractor Envirovent to tackle recurrent damp and mould or damage from any build-up of condensation. Envirovent also works with us to install and upgrade Positive Input Ventilation units at our homes.

Envirovent has shared some tips to prevent damp and mould from appearing where you live:

- Where possible, try to dry your clothes outdoors to prevent excess moisture from building up in your property. If you're not able to dry your clothes outdoors, try to keep them in a bathroom with the door closed, extract fan on and/or windows open until the clothes are fully dry.
- Bathrooms and kitchens are the worst culprits for condensation. When cooking food, boiling the kettle, or taking a shower, make sure your kitchen or bathroom door is kept closed to prevent the moisture in the air from going into colder rooms which will cause condensation to form if it touches a cold surface. If you have an extractor fan in your kitchen, make sure it's turned on when cooking.
- Similar to when cooking in the kitchen, when you're taking a shower or having a bath make sure that you turn on your extractor fan to remove the steam and moisture that is created when running warm water in a cold environment. This will help reduce condensation appearing on your bathroom windows and walls.
- If you don't have an extractor fan in your bathroom or kitchen, wipe down any cold surfaces when you have been cooking or taking a shower to remove any moisture that may have settled on the surface. This excess moisture in the air sits on the surface and will quickly turn to mould if left untreated.

How to clean mould in your home

If you have mould on your walls and ceilings, it may be possible to remove it by scrubbing it with a mould-specific cleaning product from your local supermarket. It's a good idea to take a photograph of the mould before you clean it, so that if we need to send a surveyor to your home, they'll be able to see the extent of the mould before you attempted to clean it off.



Lifting equipment

The lifting operations and lifting equipment regulations 1998, summarised as LOLER, is a set of regulations that govern the responsibilities to maintain lifting equipment to ensure it is safe for persons to use. Abri has a responsibility to adhere to these regulations regarding all lifting equipment in our responsibility.

LOLER regulations cover items such as;

Passenger lifts in communal areas

Communal stairlifts

Personal stairlifts/through floor lifts within domestic properties

Hoists

So in essence, any equipment capable of lifting a person from the ground.

Abri separates these as passenger lifts and medical lifts (stairlifts, through floor lifts, hoists etc..).

Within the LOLER guidance, Abri has clear responsibilities it has to undertake for any lifting equipment that we are responsible for;

For passenger lifts Abri carries out;

- **Periodic servicing**
- **6 monthly inspections**

For medical equipment Abri carries out;

Periodic servicing

6 monthly inspections

We just ask our customers to ensure the equipment is kept clean as this will help prolong the equipment's life span and to be available for when the services and inspections are due as these visits will ensure that the equipment is safe for continued use. Where the equipment is owned by the customer and Abri has not previously undertaken any repairs or servicing, this will remain the responsibility of the customer to maintain and inspect/service accordingly.

Should you notice any issues or non working equipment, please contact our customer services team on 0300 123 1567 or log into your portal account and log your repair.

Water Safety

Legionnaires' disease is a rare but serious disease caused by legionella bacteria within the water system and is a form of pneumonia which can be fatal. People can catch legionella disease by inhaling small water droplets suspended in the air which contain the bacteria.

Anyone can get the infection although the risk increases with age and some other factors such as:

- **Being over 45 years old**
- **Smoking**
- **People with a vulnerable immune system**
- **People with conditions such as chronic respiratory or kidney disease, diabetes, lung and heart disease**

The bacteria are commonly found in natural sources such as rivers and ponds, although people don't usually catch it from these sources as the conditions aren't right for the disease to develop.

Domestic water systems, though whilst the risk is considered low, can provide the right conditions for the bacteria to develop. This is why it's important that you understand what legionella is and the measures you can take to help control this.

Let's start with Abri's responsibilities

Abri works with specialist contractors to carry out our legal obligations to manage our water for communal water systems. We follow an Approved Code of Practices (ACoP) and monitor these properties on a monthly basis, except those properties deemed to be a low risk, like our rented homes. During gas safety checks, our engineers will make sure your boiler is set to 60°C, in line with water regulations. At this temperature legionella bacteria is killed.

Your responsibilities

The risk to self-contained domestic homes is very low due to the water in the property being used consistently, meaning fresh water is being regularly introduced into the system. But there are other steps you can take to lower the risk.

If you have a cylinder which provides your hot water, make sure the thermostat is set to 60°C. Be aware though that the water coming from your taps or shower will be very hot so take care when running a bath or shower.

If you have a boiler which provides your hot water, make sure your digital display on the boiler is set to 60°C. This will be checked annually during your gas service but it's good practice for you to check regularly to make sure the system is working correctly.

Make sure your taps and shower heads are kept clear of limescale. This part is important as the scale is a source of nutrients (food for the bacteria) which can help it grow and multiply. Supermarkets will sell descaling products to help with this, especially for hard water areas, but it's important that you read and follow the manufacturers guidance.

We'd advise descaling should take place as regularly as required but carried out at a minimum of every three months.

All taps and showers (not forgetting any outside taps) should get regular use for several minutes each week. Any taps that do not get usage for several minutes every week are referred to as "little used outlets" and will need to be flushed through weekly to ensure fresh water is regularly introduced to that tap or shower. So if you use a shower or tap daily you won't need to do a weekly flush.

If you're away for a week or longer then you will need to flush through all hot and cold taps and showers (not forgetting any outside taps) before use. For hot taps, make sure you turn on the hot water when you get back and leave for two hours to get up to the set temperature before running any hot water taps.

You've said to flush through taps or showers not used, do I just turn on my taps?

Well simply put yes, but there are safe ways to carry out the flushing of taps and showers which prevents water droplets being released into the air.

With taps, open the tap up slowly and then increase the flow of water gradually allowing the water, both hot and cold to run for a minimum of two minutes.

With showers, where possible, remove the shower head and let the water flow from the hose, running for a minimum of a full minute on the coldest setting and two minutes on the hottest setting.

Where shower heads may be fixed, you can cover them with a plastic bag, cutting a small hole in the bottom corner to allow the water to drain out.

The main point is not to create an aerosol that can be breathed in as this is the route of entry into the body for legionella bacteria.

What should I do if I have any concerns about legionella?

The purpose of sharing this information isn't to scare, but to make sure you know about the potential risk and offer advice on what you can do to lower the risk within your home.

If you have any concerns that your water temperature is not hot enough, your cold water feels warm, or you have any questions about water safety, please contact us.

This advice has been compiled using information from the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) and Public Health England (formerly the HPA).



