



COVID-19 & RELATED WATER QUALITY ISSUES.

We are in unprecedented times. None of us have ever imagined a time when our liberty and freedom would be a thing of the past. But here we are, on a temporary basis let's hope.

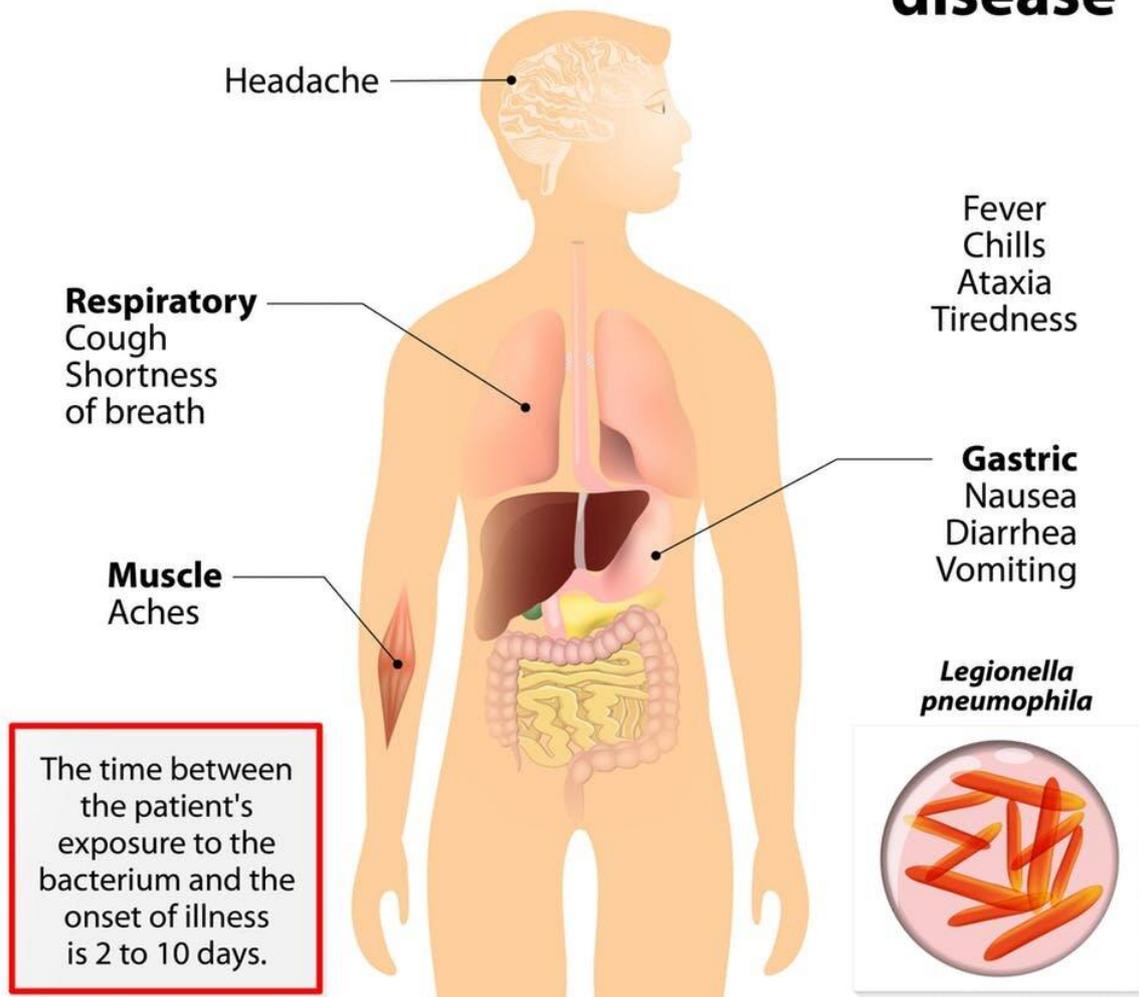
There are many properties up and down the country that are now sat dormant with little to no use. This includes, schools, offices, shops, salons, libraries, cafes, restaurants, nightclubs, cinemas and many more. The water systems within these properties are on the whole designed to fulfil the demands of full occupation and a little bit in reserve sometimes.

Therefore, we are at risk of a legionella timebomb going off if the correct action is not undertaken. The last thing the NHS are going to want is wave of patients with legionnaires disease needing ICU beds and ventilators during this crisis or just after. Legionnaires Disease would also leave patients considerably more vulnerable to serious illness from COVID-19 as it affects the respiratory system.

Legionnaires Disease can be caused as a result of legionella developing in water system and the water droplet (aerosols) from taps and showers being inhaled into your lungs. Water system that become stagnant are an ideal setting for legionella bacteria and other waterborne pathogens.

The symptoms are illustrated in the below graphic.

Legionnaires' disease



Where practical and possible, ongoing flushing should be undertaken at your property to replicate daily usage. For large properties, this may not be possible but for a high number of buildings, this should be a manageable obligation. Your legionella risk assessment consultant or water management contractor should be able to provide advice on this matter.

There are some buildings that will have been locked up following government closures and will not be accessed until they can reopen. These buildings pose the greatest risk when they reopen. The risk increases further if the occupants are in a vulnerable group or the water systems pose a greater risk due to the design (showers / aerosol generation) or inherent risk is high.

Where this is the case, planned start up procedures should be put in place in advance and a suitable date planned as soon as possible.

The options are

- Shock disinfection of the water system with post disinfection samples taken. It may be prudent to perform rapid legionella test in advance of 10-day laboratory sampling if reopening needs to happen quickly.
- If access to the property can be gained during shut down, a maintenance dose of H2O2 can be dosed into the water systems at your site to provide a level of protection over a few weeks of closure. The dose strength and timeframe should be discussed with your water treatment contractor and chemical supplier.

Careful consideration should be given to planning your start up procedures. There is going to be a high demand for disinfection services when the government gives the green light to businesses, schools and other organisations to reopen. Therefore, it may be more practical to plan a maintenance dose now to preserve the water quality and avoid delays due to labour shortages.

As mention in the above, site specific requirements should always be considered. One fit for one property may not suit the next one. Seek professional advice from your water treatment provider / water hygiene contractor / legionella risk assessment consultant who know your site and water systems.

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