



## LEGIONELLA FACT SHEET

During routine water sampling, McKinlay Shire Council detected *Legionella pneumophila* in the drinking water supply in Julia Creek, McKinlay, Kynuna and Nelia.

*Legionella* is a bacterium that occurs naturally in freshwater environments but may become a health concern when it grows and spreads, mainly within water distribution systems of buildings. *Legionellae* live predominantly within the biofilm of pipes (biofilm is the slimy sludge that coats the inside of water pipes). The biofilm provides shelter and nutrients for *Legionella* which, when conditions are favourable, may be circulated in the water.

Exposure to *Legionella pneumophila* may cause diseases such as Legionnaires Disease and Pontiac fever. Legionnaires Disease is a form of pneumonia, typically requiring hospitalisation, while Pontiac fever is a milder form of respiratory illness.

The detection of *Legionella pneumophila* does not make the water unsafe to drink however, if contaminated water is converted into an aerosol (small droplets of water in the air that contain the bacteria), and is inhaled, the bacteria may cause illness in susceptible individuals [1].

Most healthy people do not get Legionnaires' Disease after being exposed to *Legionella* as the body's immune system is able to prevent infection. Being older than 50 years or having certain risk factors can increase your chances of becoming ill. These risk factors include:

- **Being a past or current smoker of cigarettes**
- **People with chronic lung disease**
- **Having a weakened immune system**
- **Taking medication that weakens the immune system**

As a precaution, MSC are taking measures such as maintaining the reservoirs and flushing reticulation lines. Council will take an annual sample from each scheme to monitor the levels.

*Ways susceptible people can reduce exposure to Legionella around the home.*

Think about the ways in which you may be exposed to aerosols, it could be taking a shower, flushing the toilet, having a spa, getting a drink of water or playing with the

garden hose. Some easy ways to manage your exposure to *Legionella* around the home include:

- ***If you have aerators on your taps or have some scale build up on your shower or tap outlets, consider removing and cleaning them by soaking in a chlorine solution.***
- ***If the shower hasn't been used all day and you are able to, allow the shower to flush for 30 secs before using. Leave the room while the flushing is happening***
- ***Closing the toilet lid when flushing.***
- ***Use sterile water for any medical devices such as nebulisers, humidifiers etc.***
- ***Limit the flow of taps to a stream the thickness of a pencil to reduce any opportunity for aerosol production.***
- ***If water is drawn from a tank, consider cleaning and disinfecting the tank.***

Please contact your GP with any health concerns or 13HEALTH for further information.

1. Mandell, G., J. Bennett, and R. Dolin, eds. *Legionella*. Mandell, Douglas, and Bennett's principles and practice of infectious diseases. 2005, Elsevier Inc: Philadelphia. 2711-2724.

2. Water Services Association of Australia Fact Sheet: Legionella

[https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&ved=2ahUKEwizpLHEiar8AhXMxHMBHek0BogQFnoECD4QAQ&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.wsaas.asn.au%2Fsites%2Fdefault%2Ffiles%2Fpublication%2Fdownload%2FFact%2520Sheet\\_Legionella\\_Aug16.pdf&usg=AOvVaw258Mzns- 5R6JcA7j3ART1](https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&ved=2ahUKEwizpLHEiar8AhXMxHMBHek0BogQFnoECD4QAQ&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.wsaas.asn.au%2Fsites%2Fdefault%2Ffiles%2Fpublication%2Fdownload%2FFact%2520Sheet_Legionella_Aug16.pdf&usg=AOvVaw258Mzns- 5R6JcA7j3ART1)

3. Review of the prevention and control of *Legionella pneumophila* infection in Queensland, **Chief Health Officer's report**, Chief Health Officer Branch, September 2013

[https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&ved=2ahUKEwizpLHEiar8AhXMxHMBHek0BogQFnoECBEQAQ&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.health.qld.gov.au%2F\\_data%2Fassets%2Fpdf\\_file%2F0023%2F444317%2Fcho-legionella-report.pdf&usg=AOvVaw0tRmSMJ- D7c5Zm1h-KbAj](https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&ved=2ahUKEwizpLHEiar8AhXMxHMBHek0BogQFnoECBEQAQ&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.health.qld.gov.au%2F_data%2Fassets%2Fpdf_file%2F0023%2F444317%2Fcho-legionella-report.pdf&usg=AOvVaw0tRmSMJ- D7c5Zm1h-KbAj)

4. Your Home Australian Government <https://www.yourhome.gov.au/energy/hot-water-systems>

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