

Dental Surgeries - Legionella control and water quality

Dentistry generates fine water spray which has the potential to transmit Legionella bacteria into the lungs. The surgery will also have a hot and cold water system which carries risks. Dental surgeries are required to:

- a) Identify and assess sources of risk in the form of a risk assessment.
- b) Prepare a scheme for preventing, reducing or controlling the risk.
- c) Implement and manage precautions.
- d) Keep records of the precautions implemented.
- e) Appoint a person to be managerially responsible.

After the risk assessment is completed, it is important that the surgery develops the 'Written Scheme of Precautions' described in HSE's Accepted Code of Practice L8, Part 1 as follows:

'52 Where the Assessment shows that there is a reasonably foreseeable risk, the use of the water systems, parts of the water systems or systems of work that lead to exposure has to be avoided so as far as reasonable practicable.'

'53 Where this is not reasonably practicable, there should be a written scheme for controlling the risk from exposure which should be implemented and properly managed.'

The risk assessor, who may also devise the written scheme, will have reference to *Health Technical Memorandum 04-01: Safe water in healthcare premises* and *Health Technical Memorandum 01-05: Decontamination in primary care dental practices* if a full and sufficient assessment and scheme are to be drawn up.

The written scheme should contain details of the management team, their responsibilities, the policy for managing and controlling legionellosis, systems design and considerations, pre-planned maintenance, parameters & recommended limits, pre-planned maintenance task specifications, and record keeping.

Method statements for the use of cleaning agents and systems used to disinfect equipment such as Dental Unit Water Lines (DUWLs) should conform to the manufacturer's specification. Sometimes this will deviate from HSE's advice to, for example, drain bottles supplying DUWLs each night. It is essential that the scheme is clear in its detail and rationale to avoid falling foul of official guidance.