



‘Why weren’t we warned?’

A FURIOUS swimmer has hit out after the public was not told about potentially deadly bacteria at a swimming pool for two months.

Max Calo says it is "criminal" [Lewisham Council](#) did not warn people about the legionella bacteria at Ladywell Pool as soon as it was discovered.

Mr Calo, of Mount Pleasant Road, regularly uses the pool in Lewisham High Street, which has now been closed.

The 39-year-old said: "It's absolutely shocking.

"People could have contracted Legionnaires' disease and the council didn't say anything for two months. It's criminal.

"It's putting peoples' lives at risk. It should start an investigation."

The bacteria, which can cause the potentially fatal Legionnaires' disease, was found in the toilets and showers during routine checks.

A council spokesman said there was no risk to the public because these areas were closed off straight away.

She said: "It is very unlikely anybody is at risk as a result of the low levels of legionella found at Ladywell Pool.

"We have acted quickly as a precaution to ensure the safety of Ladywell Pool users and staff.

She added: "We do not believe there is any immediate danger."

"No illnesses have been reported to either the council or the Health Protection Agency.

"[Lewisham Council](#) has sought advice from both Lewisham Primary Care Trust and the SE London unit of the Health Protection Agency to help deal with this incident."

However, Mr Calo says he is worried about the elderly, who are particularly vulnerable to the disease.

The bacteria was first discovered on April 1 in two taps in the toilets, which were sealed off and disinfected.

On May 16 tests found it in both the men's and women's showers, and they were also closed off.

Two weeks later samples revealed the legionella was still there and the council told contractors Parkwood Leisure to close Ladywell Leisure Centre as a precaution on May 29.

The water system has now been chlorinated and the Director of Public Health has alerted GPs.

Liberal Democrat councillor Chris Maines, a member of Lewisham's healthier communities select committee, says the council "should have acted with a great deal more urgency".

He says the discovery of legionella raises questions about how well the pool is being looked after.

Cllr Maines said: "You expect it to be properly maintained. Things like this shouldn't be happening".

Fellow Lib Dem councillor Mark Morris said: "Merely telling people the pool has closed due to purely precautionary grounds' is totally insufficient considering the potential impact of this disease."

The pool was shut temporarily in 2002 after asbestos was found.

Two years ago artist Mr Calo led the successful Save Ladywell Pool campaign to stop it being knocked down until a replacement was built.

According to the Health Protection Agency website, the bacteria will "only become a risk to health when the temperature allows the legionellae to grow rapidly, such as in water systems which are not properly designed, installed and/or maintained".

Legionnaires' disease is contracted by breathing in fine droplets containing the bacteria.

The centre is due to reopen on June 16.

9:42am today

By Claire Burke

[Back](#)