

Control the risk of disease during storms, floods and other natural disasters

The risk of some types of disease may increase after a storm, flood or other natural disaster. This is usually due to the disruption in the environment that results in higher exposure to some bacteria. This occurs in flood water that is contaminated or results from the breakdown in amenities such as power, sewerage and water supply.

Higher incidences of wounds and injuries may result in more infections, especially if they are exposed to dirty flood water. The number of respiratory illnesses may increase due to crowded emergency living conditions or mould in people with allergies or asthma. Poor access to clean water and food can lead to gastroenteritis.

Diseases such as cholera and typhoid are not endemic in Australia so there is no risk of them occurring in the disaster situation.

Actions to take

- Maintain good personal hygiene.
- Maintain good hand washing practices—especially after going to the toilet, changing nappies and before eating.
- Avoid wading in shallow water, as it may be contaminated. If you must enter shallow storm or flood water, wear solid boots or shoes for protection.
- Cover your mouth when you sneeze or cough, particularly if you are staying in an evacuation centre or shelter.
- If you have returned home, discard food that may have been contaminated or perishable foods that have not been refrigerated to reduce the likelihood of food poisoning.
- Ensure all food preparation surfaces are thoroughly cleaned and disinfected before you reuse them.
- Clean and disinfect all wounds and keep them covered.
- Seek medical treatment early if wounds show signs of infection—including redness, pain, and swelling.
- Dispose of all waste in a responsible manner as waste can attract disease carrying pests and vermin.
- Take precautions to prevent being bitten by mosquitoes.
- The water in water tanks may be contaminated by storms, floods and other natural disasters; and should be discarded.
- Take all necessary precautions for handling asbestos cement debris. Contact your local council or emergency workers for information on any special requirements or arrangements relating to waste collection and disposal in your local area.

For more information

For more information on cleaning your home or business including information on food safety, removing mould and handling asbestos please:

- call 13HEALTH (13 43 25 84) to speak to a health professional
- visit www.health.qld.gov.au/healthieryou/disaster
- visit www.emergency.qld.gov.au/emq
- contact your nearest Queensland Health public health unit (Monday to Friday):

Brisbane North	Tel: 3624 1111	Gold Coast	Tel: 5668 3700	Rockhampton	Tel: 4920 6989
Brisbane South	Tel: 3000 9148	Hervey Bay	Tel: 4184 1800	Sunshine Coast	Tel: 5409 6600
Bundaberg	Tel: 4150 2780	Logan	Tel: 3412 2989	Toowoomba	Tel: 4631 9888
Central West	Tel: 4652 6000	Mackay	Tel: 4885 6611	Townsville	Tel: 4753 9000
Cairns	Tel: 4226 5555	Moreton Bay	Tel: 3142 1800	West Moreton	Tel: 3413 1200
Charleville	Tel: 4656 8100	Mount Isa	Tel: 4744 9100		