

**FACT SHEET:**  
**Department of Health Warns of Health and Safety Risks After the Storm Has Passed**

Preventing foodborne illness

- The Department of Health advises that you should not eat any food that may have come into contact with contaminated water from floods or storm surge.
- Commercially prepared cans of food should not be eaten if there is a bulging or opening on the can or the screw caps, soda pop bottle tops, or twist-caps.
- Undamaged, commercially canned foods can be saved if you remove the labels and then disinfect them in a solution of ¼ cup of bleach in one gallon of water; re-label the cans including expiration date and type of food. Assume that home-canned food is unsafe.
- Infants should be fed only pre-prepared canned baby formula. Do not use powdered formulas prepared with treated water. Use sterile water when preparing formula.
- Frozen and refrigerated foods can be unsafe after hurricane. When the power is out, refrigerators will keep foods cool for only about four hours. Thawed food can usually be eaten only if it is still "refrigerator cold."

Preventing waterborne illness

- Basic hygiene is very important during this emergency period. Always wash your hands with soap and water that has been boiled or disinfected before eating, after toilet use, after participating in cleanup activities, and after handling articles contaminated by floodwater or sewage.
- Flooding that occurs after hurricane may mean that water contains fecal matter from sewage systems, agricultural and industrial ways, and septic tanks. If you have open cuts or sores exposed to the floodwater, keep them as clean as possible by washing them with soap and clean water. Apply antibiotic ointment to reduce the risk of infection. If a wound or sore develops redness, swelling or drainage, see a physician.
- Do not allow children to play in floodwater. They can be exposed to water contaminated with fecal matter. Do not allow children to play with toys that have been in floodwater until the toys have been disinfected. Use ¼ cup of bleach in one gallon of water.

Preventing hazards

- Using battery-powered lanterns and flashlights is preferable.
- If you must use candles, make sure you put them in safe holders away from curtains, paper, wood, or other flammable items.
- Do not use any grill indoors.
- Do not operate a generator indoors or in a garage.

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Preventing Mosquito-borne Illness

- Heavy rains and flooding can lead to an increase in mosquitoes. Mosquitoes are most active at sunrise and sunset. Public health authorities will be working actively to help control the spread of any diseases transmitted by mosquitoes.
- To protect against mosquitoes, remain diligent in your personal mosquito protection efforts. These should include the 5 D's for prevention:
  - **Dusk and Dawn** -- Avoid being outdoors when mosquitoes are seeking blood, for many species this is during the dusk and dawn hours.
  - **Dress** -- Wear clothing that covers skin.
  - **DEET** -- When the potential exists for exposure to mosquitoes, a repellent containing DEET (N,N-diethyl-meta-toluamide, or N,N-diethyl-3-methylbenzamide) is recommended. Products with concentrations up to 30% DEET are generally recommended for most situations. It is not recommended to use DEET on children less than 2 months old. Instead, infants should be kept indoors or mosquito netting used over carriers when mosquitoes are present. If additional protection is necessary, apply a permethrin repellent directly to your clothing. Always read the manufacturer's directions carefully before you put on a repellent.
  - **Drainage** -- Check your home to rid it of standing water in which mosquitoes can lay their eggs.

**Tips on Eliminating Mosquito Breeding Sites**

Clean out eaves, troughs and gutters.

Remove old tires or drill holes in those used in playgrounds to drain.

Turn over or remove empty plastic pots.

Pick up all beverage containers and cups.

Check tarps on boats or other equipment that may collect water.

Pump out bilges on boats.

Replace water in birdbaths and pet or other animal feeding dishes at least once a week.

Change water in plant trays, including hanging plants, at least once a week.

Remove vegetation or obstructions in drainage ditches that prevent the flow of water.