



Lake County Health Department Advises Residents to be Careful During Flooding

The Lake County Health Department/Community Health Center recommends the following steps to minimize health hazards for residents who have experienced flooding in or around their homes:

- Remember, flood waters can be very powerful. Even streams and rivers that appear to be calm or shallow can be very dangerous. Do not attempt to enter or cross flooded streams or rivers, even if they appear safe.
- Prevent children and pets from playing in or drinking contaminated floodwaters left in puddles or flooded areas. This may result in illness. Be extremely careful about possible dislodged manhole covers, and the whirlpool or suction effect if water is draining. Also, people with open cuts or other wounds should take extreme care when walking through floodwaters due to the possibility of contracting tetanus. In general, flood workers who have had a tetanus shot within the past 10 years will not need to be revaccinated. However, workers who acquire a wound and who have not had a tetanus shot within 5 to 10 years may need a tetanus booster. This should be evaluated by medical personnel or a family physician.
- Although disease outbreaks are rare after flooding, flood water can contain organisms that may cause disease. If you are in a flood area and become ill, report to your family physician. Symptoms to watch for include nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, abdominal cramps, muscle aches and fevers.
- If you have a private well, check its condition **after the floodwaters have receded**. If the well casing is submerged, surface water may have entered the well and contaminated the drinking water. In these cases, you should not drink the water until it is tested and shown to meet drinking water standards. If coliform bacteria are present in your drinking water, the well should be disinfected by a licensed water well contractor and then re-sampled. LCHD has three regional offices where you can pick up sterile bottles to be filled and returned for analysis, and where information can be obtained about disinfecting wells. The Lake

County Health Department/Community Health Center will offer free water testing to residents whose wells are affected by flood waters after the floodwaters have receded. The three regional offices are located at: 3010 Grand Avenue, Waukegan, (847) 377-8020; 118 South Main Street, Wauconda, (847) 984-5000; and 121 East Grand Avenue, Lake Villa, (847) 377-7780. All three offices are open from 7 a.m. to 5 p.m.

- Before re-entering a flooded home or basement, make sure that no electrical or other safety hazards, such as leaking gas, exist.
- Do not eat food that has been exposed to floodwaters, unless the food is in cans. Thoroughly wash off sealed cans in good condition. Immerse the cans in a bleach disinfecting solution made by mixing two teaspoons of household bleach per gallon of water for at least five minutes. All spoiled foods and leaky or bulged cans should be discarded.
- Using a household detergent solution, scrub the basement and other areas of the house that have been flooded. Flush the washed areas with safe water. Follow this washing with flushing or mopping with a disinfecting solution of one-quarter cup of household bleach in a gallon of water.
- Scrub furniture, walls, fixtures and appliances with soap and safe water. Affected clothing and bedding should be machine-washed.
- Wash hands and scrub fingernails thoroughly with soap and safe water after working in flooded areas. This is especially true before eating or drinking.
- Non-porous children's toys that could be mouthed must be cleaned with soap and safe water, and then soaked for at least one minute in a solution of one tablespoon of bleach to a gallon of water. Do not rinse objects after soaking. Allow to air dry. Machine washable cloth toys should be machine washed if contaminated with floodwaters.

Do not hesitate to ask any questions if you have any doubts about the safety of any food, water or conditions around your home. Call Environmental Health Services of the Lake County Health Department at: (847) 377-8020.

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