Philadelphia Department of Public Health

Health Bulletin

August 2011
Special
Edition

Public Health Notice:
Keeping Safe After a Flood

You can do lots of things to stay safe after a flood. The Philadelphia Department of Public Health offers these tips to help you and your family stay safe during a flood and when cleaning up after the flood.

Stay Out of the Water!

- **Do Not Drive or Walk into Floodwater!** It can be deeper than you expect and you could get stuck.
- **Floodwater Moves Quickly!** It can sweep even good swimmers downstream.
- **Floodwater is NOT Clean!** You can get cut or hurt by debris floating in the water. There also might be small amounts of chemicals or sewage that could make you sick.

Electricity Warning!

If there is electrical equipment in the water, it could be electrified, and you could get shocked.

Be sure to turn off the electricity in all flooded rooms in your home or business as soon as possible.

Stay Safe!

- **Wash Your Hands!** You can get sick if you eat, drink or smoke after touching the water or things that have been spoiled by the flood.
- **Protect Yourself!** Wear waterproof gloves, boots, and other protective clothing while cleaning. These clothes should be thrown away or washed after cleanup is completed each day.
- **Call your health care provider** if you get cut or hurt by something in the floodwater, ask about getting a tetanus shot.
- **Call your health care provider** if you or a family member has any of the following:
  - **Fever over 100 degrees**
  - **Vomiting**
  - **Diarrhea**
  - **Severe stomach cramps**

For more information about going back into your house safely after a flood, visit http://emergency.CDC.gov/disasters/floods

Clean Up!

- **First turn off the electricity in all flooded rooms!**

- **Remove all water** by mopping, pumping, wet vacuuming or clearing drains.

- **Clean and dry thoroughly:**
  - All wet light fixtures (***Don't*** *turn the electricity back on until they are dry!*)

- **Throw out:**
  - All ceiling tiles, paper products, baseboards, and insulation that were damaged by water
  - All drywall up to four feet above the floodwater line
  - Furniture that has absorbed water (like mattresses, sofas, and upholstered chairs)
  - Medicines and foods that touched floodwater
  - All perishable foods that have not been refrigerated for more than six hours
  - Any frozen foods that have thawed

- **Wet vacuum, shampoo and air-dry:**
  - Carpets

- **Wash with soap and water, wipe with a disinfectant, and dry:**
  - Furniture that doesn't absorb water (like wooden chairs and cabinets)
  - All contaminated floors, counters, and other surfaces
  - All cooking and eating utensils that were touched or splashed by floodwater
  - Foam rubber items

- **Wipe with a disinfectant or wash in a dishwasher in hot water:**
  - Children's toys (***Don't*** *let children play with toys until they have been cleaned and disinfected!*)

- **Wipe twice with a disinfectant, then air-dry:**
  - Wood and metal studs

- **Open windows and doors while cleaning and for at least 24 hours after cleaning.** This will help surfaces to dry more quickly, and will help prevent mold. If you can, use fans or dehumidifiers to help dry things.

Make Your Own Disinfectant!

Ingredients

- 1/4 (one-quarter) cup of bleach
- 1 gallon of water

Instructions

- Pour bleach into water
- Mix thoroughly
- Dip a rag into the disinfectant and wipe dirty items

It's West Nile Virus Season!

You can get West Nile Virus from mosquito bites. Mosquitoes breed in standing pools of water. Be sure to dump out all water left over from the flood to avoid mosquitoes and West Nile Virus.

Learn more at http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvbid/westnile/

For more information about cleaning up after a flood, call the Health Department's Environmental Engineering Section Monday - Friday (8 am - 4:30 pm) at 215-685-7342