



**Likely Increase in Illness and Injury in Flood-Affected Counties**

**TO: West Virginia Healthcare Providers, Hospitals and Other Healthcare Facilities**

**FROM: Rahul Gupta, MD, MPH, FACP, Commissioner and State Health Officer  
Bureau for Public Health, WV Department of Health and Human Resources**

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**LOCAL HEALTH DEPARTMENTS:** PLEASE DISTRIBUTE TO COMMUNITY HEALTH PROVIDERS, HOSPITAL-BASED PHYSICIANS, INFECTION CONTROL PREVENTIONISTS, LABORATORY DIRECTORS, AND OTHER APPLICABLE PARTNERS

**OTHER RECIPIENTS:** PLEASE DISTRIBUTE TO ASSOCIATION MEMBERS, STAFF, ETC.

The West Virginia Bureau for Public Health (WVBPH) anticipates increased reports of illnesses and injuries among residents and responders in flood-affected counties in West Virginia. Populations affected by flooding are often at an increased risk of injuries, heat-related illnesses, carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning, gastrointestinal (GI) illnesses, and mosquito-borne diseases.

Residents and responders are exposed to highly dangerous situations during flood cleanup activities. Cuts and puncture wounds, falls, and electrocution are common injuries after floods. They are also at risk of heat-related illnesses such as dehydration, sunburn, heat stress (particularly among the elderly), heat exhaustion, and heat stroke. WVBPH is currently monitoring for increased reporting of injury and heat-related illnesses.

Alternate sources of power are being used by residents in affected areas due to power outages and downed power lines. CO is created from devices such as portable generators, stoves, lanterns, gas ranges, or by burning charcoal and wood. CO can build up in enclosed spaces, potentially leading to poisoning or death of people and pets. Common symptoms of CO poisoning include headaches, dizziness, nausea, vomiting, chest pain, and confusion. Consider CO poisoning in patients presenting with these symptoms.

Flood water may contain sewage which can lead to outbreaks of GI illnesses associated with exposure to bacteria, viruses, or parasites. Consider testing for GI pathogens if a patient reports three or more days of vomiting, diarrhea, bloody diarrhea, or other GI-related symptoms. Clusters of GI illnesses should be reported to the local health department as they may represent GI outbreaks in an area.

Please advise patients to be proactive about mosquito bite prevention due to increased standing water as a result of flooding. West Virginia continues to conduct annual surveillance of human cases of La Crosse encephalitis and West Nile virus. We are also currently engaged in conducting enhanced surveillance of various mosquito species. Encourage patients to wear mosquito repellent (e.g. products with  $\geq 20\%$  DEET) if possible, and wear long-sleeved shirts and long pants. Patients should also be advised to remove water-holding containers and organic debris from around their homes as they are ideal mosquito breeding sites.

For more information, please contact your local health department or the Division of Infectious Disease Epidemiology at (304) 558-5358, extension 1 or the answering service at (304) 925-9946. You can also visit [www.dide.wv.gov](http://www.dide.wv.gov).

This message was directly distributed by the West Virginia Bureau for Public Health to local health departments and professional associations. Receiving entities are responsible for further disseminating the information as appropriate to the target audience.

**Categories of Health Alert messages:**

**Health Alert:** Conveys the highest level of importance. Warrants immediate action or attention.

**Health Advisory:** Provides important information for a specific incident or situation. May not require immediate action.

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