



State Emergency Operations Center

Joint Information Center

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Returning Home After the Flood: Important Reminders and Precautions

The Mississippi State Department of Health (MSDH) continues to monitor the Mississippi River flooding and any health impact it may have on the residents of Mississippi. As the flood waters recede, there are many precautions residents can take to ensure safety in all clean-up efforts.

Avoid Floodwater:

- Stay out of floodwater.
- Floodwater may be contaminated by sewage systems, agricultural and industrial waste, and septic tanks. If you have open cuts or sores exposed to floodwater, keep them as clean as possible by washing 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 raw sewage. Do not allow children to play with toys that have been in floodwater until the toys have been disinfected. Use one-quarter cup of bleach to one gallon of water.

Personal Protection:

When cleaning up storm-damaged areas, be sure to wear protective clothing and sturdy shoes to prevent cuts and scratches from debris. Do not let children play in floodwater, and discard any items that come into contact with floodwater.

Any food (including food in plastic or glass), medicines, cosmetics or bottled water that has come in contact with floodwater should be discarded. If in doubt, throw it out. Intact cans may be thoroughly disinfected with one quarter cup of bleach to one gallon of water, and then used.

Tetanus Information:

Tetanus vaccination is recommended if it's been 10 years or more since your last tetanus vaccination (Tdap is the recommended vaccine). In the event of a puncture wound or wound contaminated with floodwater, individuals should consult a healthcare provider. Tetanus vaccinations are available at all county health departments and are free in the following federally declared counties impacted by the flood waters: Adams, Bolivar, Claiborne, Coahoma, Desoto, Humphreys, Issaquena, Jefferson, Sharkey, Tunica, Warren, Washington, Wilkinson, and Yazoo.

Mosquitoes and Insects:

- Once the flood water recedes, remove all sources of standing water in and around your property, including bird baths, wading pools, ceramic pots, etc.
- Avoid places and times when mosquito activity is at its peak – evenings and mornings have the most activity.
- Protect yourself with long, light-colored clothing or use insect repellent containing DEET or Picaridin. Strictly follow label directions when applying the product.

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Snakes:

If you come in contact with a snake during cleanup efforts, do not attempt to catch or kill the snake. Slowly back away from the snake. If you are bitten by a snake:

- Do not attempt to cut, suck, or apply ice to the bite area.
- Do not apply a tourniquet.
- Call 911 immediately. Lay the person flat and keep the bitten part of the body at the level of the rest of the body. Do not elevate or dangle a bitten arm or leg.
- Should it be needed, there is plenty of antivenin available throughout the state.

For more information on flood safety, visit www.HealthyMS.com. Also, look for us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/HealthyMS or follow us on Twitter at www.twitter.com/msdh.

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Note to media: After hours or during emergencies, call 1-866-HLTHY4U (1-866-458-4948)