

Stay safe and healthy during storms, floods and other natural disasters

Following the initial damage to property and infrastructure caused by storms, floods and other natural disasters, sickness and injury can still occur.

The main health risks in natural disaster areas include:

- injury—such as falls and skin lacerations
- skin infections—which if not treated can develop into blood infection
- snake and spider bites
- sunburn
- mosquito-borne infections.

Follow these safety tips to stay safe and healthy during the clean-up and recovery.

Preparing to clean up

Always wear protective clothing—such as sturdy footwear, loose long-sleeved shirts and trousers, thick gloves, hat and sunglasses.

Muddy surfaces can be extremely slippery resulting in falls that can cause fractures and other injuries. Good shoes can help, but also consider using a walking pole or similar—such as a piece of smooth timber (e.g. broom handle or a piece of tree branch).

Working safely onsite

Don't walk or wade through flood water, if you can avoid it

- There is an increased risk of wound infections, diarrhoeal diseases, conjunctivitis, and ear, nose and throat infections from polluted waters. Leptospirosis and melioidosis can also be contracted from flood water.
- Young children, the elderly, pregnant women, people with chronic diseases—such as diabetes and kidney disease—and people who abuse alcohol or other drugs are more prone to infections and should consider avoiding flood water and mud.

Wash your hands and keep wounds covered

Wash your hands with soap and water or hand sanitiser after:

- contact with damaged materials, flood water or mud
- going to the toilet
- before making or eating food.

Protect your skin from cuts that could become infected.

- Clean and disinfect all wounds and keep them covered. Consider avoiding flood water and mud if you have broken skin or wounds, especially if you have diabetes or other chronic diseases. Wounds heal most quickly if the limbs are rested and elevated.

- See a health professional early for severe wounds, especially if the wound is dirty or becomes red, sore, swollen or painful.

Watch out for snakes, spiders and mossies

- Watch out for snakes and spiders that may have hidden inside houses or debris.
- Sandflies and mosquitoes may become a real nuisance following storms, floods and other natural disasters. Wear long sleeves and long pants and apply insect repellent.

Be careful of contaminated water

- Your council will alert you if the local water supply is contaminated. If in doubt, bring water to a rolling boil for at least one minute and cool before drinking.

Starting the clean-up

Ensure the storm, flood or natural disaster is over, it is safe and any waters have receded before starting to clean up around your home and business. Always wear waterproof gloves, rubber boots and eye protection, such as sunglasses, while cleaning.

For more information

For more information on cleaning your home or business, including information on food safety, removing mould and handling asbestos please:

- call 13HEALTH (13 43 25 84) to speak to a health professional
- visit www.health.qld.gov.au/healthieryou/disaster
- visit www.emergency.qld.gov.au/emq

For further information, contact your nearest Queensland Health public health unit Monday to Friday):

Brisbane North	Tel: 3624 1111	Gold Coast	Tel: 5668 3700	Rockhampton	Tel: 4920 6989
Brisbane South	Tel: 3000 9148	Hervey Bay	Tel: 4184 1800	Sunshine Coast	Tel: 5409 6600
Bundaberg	Tel: 4150 2780	Logan	Tel: 3412 2989	Toowoomba	Tel: 4631 9888
Central West	Tel: 4652 6000	Mackay	Tel: 4885 6611	Townsville	Tel: 4753 9000
Cairns	Tel: 4226 5555	Moreton Bay	Tel: 3142 1800	West Moreton	Tel: 3413 1200
Charleville	Tel: 4656 8100	Mount Isa	Tel: 4744 9100		