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DOH-Pasco Urges Residents to Follow Flood Safety Tips Following Hurricane Helene



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Pasco County, Fla. — The Florida Department of Health in Pasco County (DOH-Pasco) urges residents to be aware of the health risks associated with flooding. Skin contact with flood waters does not, by itself, pose a serious health risk. However, health hazards are a concern when waters are or become contaminated with bacteria or contain dangerous debris.

DOH-Pasco recommends the following to [prevent illness or injury from flood waters](#):

- Basic hygiene is critical. If you are under a boil water notice, use commercially bottled water for mixing baby formula. Wash your hands with soap and either disinfected or boiled and cooled water, especially before preparing or eating food, after toilet use, after handling a soiled diaper, after participating in flood cleanup activities, and after handling objects contaminated with flood water or sewage.
- Avoid eating or drinking anything that has been contaminated with flood waters.
- Avoid contact with flood waters, especially if you have open cuts or sores.
- If you have any open cuts or sores and come in contact with flood waters, wash the area well with soap to prevent infection. If a wound develops redness, swelling, or drainage, seek immediate medical attention.
- Residents who sustain lacerations and/or puncture wounds are encouraged to contact their primary health care provider to make sure they are current on their tetanus vaccine and possibly get a booster.

If on a [septic system](#) and your plumbing is functioning slowly:

- Conserve water as much as possible; the less water used, the less sewage the septic tank must process. Minimize use of your washing machine.
- Do not have the septic tank pumped. Exceptionally high-water tables might crush a septic tank that was pumped dry. If the basic problem is high ground water, pumping the tank does nothing to solve that problem.

If your well is flooded:

- Heavy rainfall may have made your well water unsafe to drink. If you are unsure about the impact of flooding on your well water, use bottled water or boil water for drinking, making ice, teeth brushing, and washing any areas of the skin that have been cut or injured.
- If your [well is affected by flood waters](#), there may be disease-causing organisms in your water making it unsafe to drink.

DOH-Pasco also reminds the community to protect themselves from mosquito bites by following these simple precautions:

- Protect yourself with repellent by applying it to exposed skin.
- Drain standing water around your home.
- Keep screens on all windows and repair any holes.

If you have lost power and are using a generator, DOH-Pasco reminds you to use it safely:

- Carbon dioxide (CO) is invisible and odorless but inhaling it can cause serious health issues and even death, because portable generators produce high levels of CO very quickly.
- Never use generators indoors or in your garage. All gas-powered or charcoal-burning equipment should be run outdoors, well away from windows and doors.
- Make sure your CO detector is working if you have one installed.

DOH-Pasco also suggests these post-storm tips for mold cleanup:

- Any items soaked with flood waters that can't be cleaned or dried completely within 24 to 48 hours should be disposed of.
- Open all doors and windows when removing wet or moldy items to avoid exposure.
- Scrub wet surfaces with detergent and water to remove visible mold.
- Remove visible mold before painting or caulking.
- Never mix bleach with other cleansers or ammonia to avoid health issues.

For additional questions regarding well water testing, contact DOH-Pasco Environmental Public Health at 727-841-4425 option 3.

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