

# FACTSHEET

## Flooding and Diarrheal Illness

### If I live in an area affected by flooding, should I be concerned about diarrheal illnesses?

If you drink water from a well that has been dirtied with flood waters, or from any other pollutants or germs, you could develop a gastrointestinal disorder –nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, abdominal cramps, etc. You can also become ill from germs on your hands or in contaminated food.

### What can I do to protect myself and my family from this?

Make sure your drinking water is safe. Observe “boil water” and other notices about your water supply. Private wells in flooded areas should be tested by the health department. Check with your public water system to find out the results of tests on the water.

[https://www.tceq.texas.gov/drinkingwater/homeland\\_security/flood/flood\\_safewater.html](https://www.tceq.texas.gov/drinkingwater/homeland_security/flood/flood_safewater.html)

### Hygiene

Practice good personal hygiene. Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water after coming into contact with flood water, after using the bathroom, and before eating. Make sure that your other family members do too. If you do not have clean water, use an antibacterial hand gel.

### Should I see a doctor if I get diarrhea?

Most cases of mild diarrhea can be managed at home. Make sure drink plenty of liquids (that are safe from contamination) so that you don't become dehydrated. However, if you or any of your family members have moderate to severe diarrhea (more than 4 or 5 watery stools per day), any bloody diarrhea, fever over 100 degrees, or a diarrheal illness that lasts longer than 3 days, see a doctor. This is especially important for small children and the elderly.

### Is it important to find out what caused my illness?

If your illness is serious enough to see a doctor, it is important to try to find what caused it. Finding

the source of the problem can help determine how to best treat your illness and how to protect others from becoming ill. If there is an outbreak of diarrheal disease in a community, it is especially important to identify the specific germ and where it came from in order to stop the spread of illness throughout the community.

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