

Explain what these images and the text have to do with the aftermath of a hurricane:



Health Concerns Linger After Hurricane Harvey

WebMD

By Kathleen Doheny

Sept. 7, 2017 -- The hurricane has gone, but health concerns and disease risk remain for all who went through it.

Even healthy people, after Harvey's destructive force, could face health hazards related to polluted air, contaminated water, infected wounds, mold, contagious diseases, carbon monoxide, and mosquitoes.

"Going back into the flood environment has risks," says Albert Rizzo, MD, senior medical adviser for the American Lung Association.

The cleanup itself can be hazardous, he says, exposing people to the dangers Harvey left behind. Being aware of the risks and taking precautions can lessen health problems.

Risks in the Air

"Wearing some type of protective mask might be advisable," says Rizzo, who's also section chief of pulmonary medicine for Christiana Care Health System in Newark, DE.

When rebuilding starts, he says, even more contaminants will be in the air. During construction, dust and fibers are likely to be released from drywall, plaster, flooring, and other sources, and they can irritate the lungs.

Portable devices like electric generators and cooking stoves can give off carbon monoxide, Rizzo says. The colorless, odorless gas killed 10 people after hurricanes Katrina and Rita in 2005, according to the CDC.

To avoid the gas, don't use a generator inside your home, basement, or garage or less than 20 feet from doors, windows, or vents. Don't run a generator inside unless it is professionally installed and vented.

Mold, too, can be a danger.

"Mold will be a potential irritant to those who have a lung problem," Rizzo says, "but even [to] those without." The quicker cleanup is done the better, he says. The ideal window to prevent mold is within 48 hours.

Things that soak up water and can't be cleaned and dried quickly need to be removed. That often means removing carpeting, upholstery, drywall, and insulation.

To clean mold, mix a cup of household bleach with a gallon of uncontaminated water. Or, lightly mist mold spores with rubbing alcohol. In some cases, you might need a professional mold service.

Open all doors and windows to air out your home, and use fans to dry wet areas.

Risks in the Water

Floodwaters and standing water make disease more likely. Floodwater may contain sewage and toxic chemicals. Anyone who accidentally swallows floodwaters could get stomach problems.

Houston-area hospitals have seen quite a few storm survivors with skin infections after being exposed to floodwaters, the Houston Chronicle reports. Wounds that stayed wet for a long time became infected, hospital officials say.

If a wound is minor, self-care is OK, the CDC says. That involves washing your hands, cleaning the wound with soap and water, and examining it for dirt and other debris. Cover with a dry clean cloth or adhesive bandage.

Risks All Around You

As Texans escaped flooded homes to shelters, the risk of catching what their shelter neighbors brought with them was real, says Adalja. "People are exposed to others who may have respiratory or GI illness," he says. "There is less emphasis on personal hygiene."

And that can become a blueprint for the spread of colds, intestinal distress, and other ailments that can spread quickly, he says.

That Buzzing Sound Is Bad, Too

"We're at the tail end of mosquito season," Adalja says. Still, "Texas is home to many mosquito-borne illnesses," including dengue fever, West Nile virus and chikungunya virus.

Besides wearing insect repellent, one of the best ways to control the mosquito population is to get rid of standing water, Adalja says. And that means all of it. "A mosquito needs only a bottle cap [of water] to lay eggs," he says.