

Hurricane Helene caused extensive damage in western North Carolina. Many communities have been cut off due to flooding and downed trees. These storms can produce significant public health risks. Here are some tips you can use to keep safe.

Floodwater

Exposure to contaminated floodwater can cause wound infections, skin rashes, stomach (gastrointestinal) illnesses, and tetanus.

If you come into contact with floodwater:

- Wash the area with soap and clean water as soon as possible. If you don't have soap or water, use alcohol-based wipes or sanitizer.
- Take care of wounds and seek medical attention if necessary.
- Wash clothes contaminated with flood or sewage water in hot water and detergent before reusing them.
- If a wound develops redness, swelling, oozing (drainage), pain and soreness, or you develop a fever, seek immediate medical attention.

Diarrheal Diseases

- Protect yourself and your loved ones from diarrheal diseases: wash your hands after contact with floodwater. Also be sure to wash children's hands with soap and water often and always before meals.
- Do not allow children to play in floodwater areas.
- Do not allow children to play with toys that have been contaminated by floodwater and have not been disinfected.
- Do not bathe in water that may be contaminated with sewage or toxic chemicals. This includes rivers, streams, or lakes that are contaminated by floodwater.

Protecting yourself from mosquitos, yellow jackets, and other stinging insects

- The flood waters from Hurricane Helene have disrupted underground nests and other homes of these insects, causing increased risk of bites/stings.
- If you are allergic to insect stings, make sure you always have Benadryl and an EpiPen with you.
- The state is actively working to ensure there is adequate supply for those in need. For mosquito protection, please refer the health promotion "Fight the Bite".

Resources that we can share with individuals and families:

- Click [here](#) for resources to help you use safe water during a boil advisory.
- Click [here](#) for food safety and surface sanitation after a flood.
- Click [here](#) for information on power line safety after the storm.
- Click [here](#) for information on how to stay safe if you encounter wildlife after a flood such as large animals (deer, bears), fire ants, rodents, and snakes.

Reach out to Kristy Myers (kmyers@arcnc.org or 919.703.3048) if you need additional resources for support.