

Even after the immediate threats of a disaster have passed, the remaining destruction and wreckage pose significant health risks. Mold, spoiled food, and damaged structures and buildings are particularly dangerous, and the already-strained healthcare infrastructure may be slower to respond to accidents or illnesses. It's critical to stay vigilant, careful, and not take the relative calm for granted.

Returning Home After a Disaster

-  **Use caution when cleaning debris or fixing broken items.** Always wear gloves, masks, and protective eyewear, and beware of glass, nails, and other sharp objects. If you are cut or scraped, clean and disinfect the wound thoroughly and keep it covered.
-  **Don't overexert yourself.** Remember to take frequent breaks while cleaning and repairing your home and other items.
-  **Dispose of foods that may have spoiled or been exposed to floodwater.** Without power, perishable foods only last for 4 hours in the refrigerator and 24-48 hours in the freezer.
-  **Dispose of medicines and other medical supplies that may have been exposed to floodwaters.** It's important that medicines and medical supplies stay within a certain temperature range and remain completely dry. Dispose of any items you think may have been damaged in any way.
-  **Disinfect cooking and eating surfaces.** Use boiling water or a solution of one-tablespoon bleach to one-gallon clean water to clean pots, pans, countertops, dishes and silverware.
-  **Check for mold inside your home, especially if you have asthma or another respiratory condition.** Mold can cause irritation and inflammation of existing respiratory conditions.
-  **Check for gas leaks, and do not run gas-powered generators, grills or heaters indoors.** Gas fumes contain carbon monoxide, which may build up and be lethal.
-  **Beware of fire ants, mosquitos and other insects.** Poisonous and disease-carrying insects are more common during flooding.
-  **Contact family members and friends.** Stay in contact and let them know you are safe.

Healthcare Ready is here to help you stay prepared for a natural disaster, infectious disease outbreak or man-made event. Our online resources provide easy tips for what to do when a disaster strikes and help make life-after as normal as possible. For more information on how the management of your rare or chronic illness can be impacted during a disaster, and what steps you can take, visit www.healthcare-ready.org, email us at alerts@healthcareready.org, and contact us at 1-866-247-2694.