NJ Health
New Jersey Department of Health

After a flood, what the public should know about...

Flood water/Sewage

Is flood water safe?
Protect yourself from flood water; flood water is dangerous. Flooding may cause municipal sewage systems and residential sanitary systems to back flow into homes and buildings. Materials and items damaged by flood water containing raw sewage must be handled carefully. Avoid contact with the flood water and wear protective clothing: gloves, masks, boots. Throw away any food or drink that the flood water touched. Broken glass, sharp pieces of wood, and other sharp items (nails, screws, sheet metal) may also be in the flood water.

Are there health risks associated with flood water?
Yes, flood water can pose health risk including infectious disease and chemical hazards. Swallowing (ingesting) flood water can cause diarrheal disease. Additionally, since broken glass and other sharp objects may be in flood water, you should have a first aid kit to treat minor cuts and abrasions to prevent infection. Open wounds and rashes exposed to flood water can become infected. It is important to avoid flood water when possible if you have an open wound. Cover any wound immediately with a waterproof bandage and keep it as clean as possible. If swelling or redness occurs, seek immediate medical care.

What can I do to protect my home from mold?
Open all doors and windows and use fans to allow air to circulate and dry out the whole house. Completely dry hard (non-porous) surfaces, then clean and disinfect the hard surfaces with dilute bleach.

What cleaning products can I use to clean up after the flood?
Cleaning materials such as bleach and water solution, disinfectants and other cleaning products may be used. Never mix cleaning products. Never use gasoline powered generators or power washers inside a building. Always wear rubber boots, gloves, mask and goggles when cleaning.

For more information

- Your local health department http://ni.eov/health/lh/directorv/lhdselectcountv.shtml
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) http://emergencv.cdc.gov/disasters/
- Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) www.fema.gov (800) 621.3362
- New Jersey Dept. of Health, Environmental & Occupational Health Assessment Program www.ni.gov/health/iep/index.shtml
- New Jersey Office of Emergency Management http://www.readv.ni.gov