

Volunteers in Floods and Other Disasters: No Extra Immunizations Needed

You may be surprised to know this but as a volunteer worker, you don't need shots like tetanus or hepatitis if there are floods or other disasters. Exposure to flood waters does not increase the risk of tetanus, and other diseases prevented by vaccines. In fact, calls for mass vaccination can pull needed resources away from clean-up and rescue efforts.

Tetanus

If you are dealing with a flood or other disaster, you don't need to take time to get a tetanus shot right now. Make sure you and your family are up-to-date with tetanus shots, here's when they are needed:

- Adults: Get a tetanus booster (Td - or Tdap if never received) every 10 years
- Children: Get a series of four shots between 2 months and 18 months of age, and booster shots at 4 to 6 years of age and Tdap at 11 to 12 years of age.

If you are wounded

If you get a wound, you will need to seek medical care. Follow the instructions given by your sponsor agency. Whether or not you need a tetanus shot will depend on the type of wound you have and when you last had a shot. Being up-to-date with your tetanus vaccination can make treatment for any wound that easier.

Hepatitis A

There is no reason for people to get a hepatitis A shot during floods or other disasters. Hepatitis A disease is not a risk when working in flood waters.

Hepatitis B

There is no reason for people to get hepatitis B shots during floods or other disasters. Hepatitis B disease is not a risk in floods.

Prevent infection during clean-up

To avoid injury and prevent infection while doing disaster clean-up, follow these steps:

- Wash your hands often using soap and water.
- Wear protective clothing to prevent injury.
 - Heavy, hard-soled shoes
 - Long-sleeved shirt and long pants
 - Heavy, waterproof, cut-resistant work gloves
 - Safety goggles
- Take care of wounds right away

For minor wounds:

- Wash your hands first before caring for a cut
- Clean the wound with soap and water
- Pat the wound area dry and apply a clean, dry dressing

For more serious wounds:

- Clean the dirt around the wound
- Loosely cover the wound if possible and seek medical care