

Minnesota Department of Health

# Health Care Volunteers in Floods and Other Disasters: No Extra Immunizations Needed

You may be surprised to know this: As a volunteer health care worker, you don't need special shots like tetanus or hepatitis for floods and other disasters. However, you should already be immunized according to national recommendations for health care workers. This should include vaccines routinely recommended for adults as well as hepatitis B and influenza (during flu season).

Diseases prevented by vaccines are uncommon in floods and other disasters. In fact, calls for mass vaccination can pull needed resources away from clean-up and rescue efforts.

## Tetanus

You don't need to take time to get a tetanus shot right now if you are dealing with a flood or other disaster. Just so you know, this is when tetanus shots are due:

- Adults: Get a tetanus booster every 10 years
- Children: Get a basic series of four shots between 2 months and 18 months of age, and booster shots at 4 to 6 years of age and 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.

## Hepatitis A

There is no reason for most people to get a hepatitis A shot during floods or other disasters. Hepatitis A is not a risk in floods. Even sewer workers don't need hepatitis A shots.

## Hepatitis B

Health care workers who come into contact with blood and other body fluids should already be immunized for hepatitis B. As always, apply blood-borne precautions when providing care to injured persons.

## Protect yourself from injury

To avoid injury and prevent infection while tending to victims of floods and other disasters, wear protective clothing:

- Heavy, hard-soled shoes
- Long-sleeved shirt
- Long pants

## Immunization questions?

- Call your local health department
- Call the CDC Immunization Hotline, 1-800-232-4636
- Visit the MDH website, [www.health.state.mn.us/immunize](http://www.health.state.mn.us/immunize)



Immunization Program  
P.O. Box 64975  
St. Paul, MN 55164-0975  
651-201-5503, 1-800-657-3970  
[www.health.state.mn.us/immunize](http://www.health.state.mn.us/immunize)