

Flood threat to physical and mental health

Doctors are urging north Queenslanders to be extra vigilant to safeguard both their physical and mental health during the flood recovery.

AMA Queensland North Queensland representative Dr Michael Clements said in the aftermath of a flood it was common for people to experience psychological distress and, if the signs continue for more than five days, they may need extra support.

“Extraordinary stress and environmental threats like infection are a toxic combination,” Dr Clements said.

“If you’re hot, tired, exhausted or overwhelmed, you will be more susceptible to injury, infection, depression or anxiety.”

See the Signs

Dr Clements urged people to keep an eye out for the seven signs that someone may need to see a GP for support:

- Complains of continued poor sleep
- Seems easily overwhelmed
- Using drugs or alcohol to cope
- Withdrawing from family and friends
- Problems performing at work
- Easily startled or declining social invitations
- Increased or unreasonable irritability.

“It will take months, if not years, for many people to rebuild their lives after this disaster,” he said. “But no one has to manage on their own. GPs are here to help with both your physical and mental health.”

Dr Clements said gastroenteritis was starting to spread rapidly in the flooded areas and he urged residents to seek early medical treatment.

“Flood waters and mud can get into small scratches and cuts and lead to major infections, swelling, ulceration and even abscesses,” he said.

“The soil-based bacteria melioidosis is particularly dangerous for people who are immune-suppressed.”

Safety precautions

Dr Clements advised those taking part in the clean up to wear shoes, long pants and long-sleeved shirts to avoid cuts and scratches and to wash thoroughly at the end of each day.

“Wear a face mask if you are cleaning up mould and do not take part in clean-up activities if you have a compromised immune system or an illness,” he said.

“I know everyone wants to do their bit to help but the consequences of coming into contact with bacteria can be dire.”

Doctors redeployed

While a number of doctors' surgeries had been flooded-affected, Dr Clements said GPs had been redeployed to ensure their patients had access to medical care.

"There are no issues with accessing a GP," he said. "If your usual doctor has been flood-affected, call a nearby clinic and there will be a doctor able to see you.

"For people who are stuck on flood-bound properties or in remote areas, Lifeline provides a 24-hour phone counselling service on 13 11 14."

AMA Queensland is providing on-the-ground support to flood affected members; for more information visit <https://ama.com.au/qld/floods-member-assistance-and-support>

DOWNLOAD THE 'SEE THE SIGNS' POSTER HERE:

https://ama.com.au/sites/default/files/QLD/PDFs/SeetheSigns_poster.pdf

MEDIA CONTACT: Michelle Hele, Sequel PR - 0411 112 114



Are you at risk?

SEE THE SIGNS

- ! Complaints of continued poor sleep with ongoing nightmares.
- ! Observations a person is easily overwhelmed, tearful or fragile.
- ! The use of drugs or alcohol to suppress intense emotions or to try and achieve sleep.
- ! A pattern of withdrawing from family and friends and not engaging in day to day discussions that generally allow people to slowly debrief.
- ! Problems performing at work such as struggling to concentrate on the job at hand.
- ! Startling easily and declining invitations for social engagements and other usually pleasurable activities.
- ! Increased or unreasonable irritability with family, workmates or friends.

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