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Look After Your Health After The Floods

Posted on Wednesday 9th December 2015

As Cumbria starts to clean up after the floods doctors in the county are urging people to look after their health.

Dr Geoff Joliffe, a GP in Barrow and the Interim Clinical Chair at NHS Cumbria Clinical Commissioning Group, said: "This is a difficult time for many people but it is important that people look after themselves. Many people will be keen to just get on with the clean-up, but we would advise that people don't overdo it and remember that tiredness, difficulty sleeping and anxiety are normal in these circumstances."

He said "NHS staff in Cumbria have worked incredibly hard in very difficult circumstances to ensure services continued throughout the severe weather. We know how much the public have appreciated their dedication.

"Services are still under pressure, so please can everyone play their part by only using A&E and 999 for life threatening and serious incidents. General medical advice and guidance is available free by calling NHS 111 or using www.nhs.uk"

There are some basic steps that people can follow to keep themselves well:

Please make sure you have a good supply of medication – don't leave it until the last minute to fill a repeat prescription.

For most people, feeling temporarily distressed does not interfere with their abilities to cope with the process of recovery. However, it is important not to underestimate the stress and strain of being flooded and cleaning up after floods.

Talk to children who have been affected about the experience – they may have been frightened and feel unsure about what will happen next.

Loss of school facilities, interrupted attendance at school, feelings of loss of control and worry that flooding may reoccur may affect children's behaviour.

For those patients who receive home care services involving medication that must be refrigerated, and have been affected by the power cut, please call your home care provider helpline number.

There is also helpful information and advice for those involved in the clean-up at www.cumbria.gov.uk and at www.cumbriaccg.nhs.uk

Some key tips if you come into contact with floodwater:

Wear protective clothing – wellies, waterproof gloves and apron when cleaning.

If you are pressure washing wear a facemask and goggles. Goggles should be washed in clean water after every use.

Wash your hands thoroughly after any contact with flood water if possible with warm, clean water and soap. Use cold water to wash if warm is not available.

If there is no clean water, use disposable soapy, wet wipes or sanitising gel to carefully clean all parts of your hands and dry them

Make sure you rinse and dry your hands after going to the toilet, before eating or preparing food, after being in contact with floodwater, sewage or with items that have been in the water.

Protect any open cuts or sores with waterproof plasters.

Wash clothes used for cleaning on a separate cycle from your other clothes.

If you are involved in cleaning up a flood hit property:

Don't turn on gas or electrics that have been wet, unless they have been checked by a qualified technician.

When you are 'drying out' a property ensure good ventilation if using portable indoor heating appliances to dry out indoor spaces.

Do not use petrol or diesel generators or other similar fuel-driven equipment indoors: the exhaust gases contain carbon monoxide, which can kill.

Do not cook on a barbecue indoors.

If you feel ill after being in contact with floodwater:

If you feel unwell this does not necessarily mean that you are suffering from any infection. If you are concerned, then call '111'.

Swallowing floodwater or mud can cause diarrhoea, fever or abdominal pain.

Mention the flood if you see your GP with abdominal complaints that started within 10 days of being exposed to floodwater or sewage contamination.

Dr Joliffe added: "This is a very upsetting and worrying time for a lot of people. If you feel that you need support please contact your GP, and keep an eye on children who may be very confused and anxious after the events of the last few days."

There is more advice available on the Cumbria Flood 2015 page of our website

<http://www.cumbriaccg.nhs.uk/news/floods-2015.aspx>

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