

HEALTH ADVISORY



Public Health
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REGION IV PUBLIC HEALTH

Clark, Cowlitz, Skamania, Wahkiakum
counties and Cowlitz Tribe

TO: Physicians and other Healthcare Providers

Please distribute a copy of this information to each provider in your organization.

Questions regarding this information may be directed to the following Region IV health officers:

Alan Melnick, MD, MPH, CPH

Clark County Public Health, (360) 397-8412

Skamania County Community Health, (509) 427-3850

Jennifer Vines, MD, MPH

Cowlitz County Health & Human Services, (360) 414-5599

Wahkiakum County Health & Human Services, (360) 795-6207

Alert categories:

Health Alert: conveys the highest level of importance; warrants immediate action or attention.

Health Advisory: provides important information for a specific incident or situation; may not require immediate action.

Health Update: provides updated information regarding an incident or situation; no immediate action necessary.

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**HEALTH
ADVISORY**
October 24, 2017

Advice for Providers Treating Patients in or Recently Returned from Hurricane- Affected Areas, Including Puerto Rico and US Virgin Islands



This advisory has been slightly modified from the one distributed via the CDC Health Alert Network on October 24, 2017, 1330 ET (1:30 PM ET)

Summary

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is working with federal, state, territorial, and local agencies and global health partners in response to recent hurricanes. CDC is aware of media reports and anecdotal accounts of various infectious diseases in hurricane-affected areas, including Puerto Rico and the US Virgin Islands (USVI). Because of compromised drinking water and decreased access to safe water, food, and shelter, the conditions for outbreaks of infectious diseases exist.

The purpose of this advisory is to remind clinicians assessing patients currently in or recently returned from hurricane-affected areas to be vigilant in looking for certain infectious diseases, including leptospirosis, dengue, hepatitis A, typhoid fever, vibriosis, and influenza.

Background

Hurricanes Irma and Maria made landfall in Puerto Rico and USVI in September 2017, causing widespread flooding and devastation. Natural hazards associated with the storms continue to affect many areas. Infectious disease outbreaks of diarrheal and respiratory illnesses can occur when access to safe water and sewage systems are disrupted and personal hygiene is difficult to maintain. Additionally, vector borne diseases can occur due to increased mosquito breeding in standing water; both Puerto Rico and USVI are at risk for outbreaks of dengue, Zika, and chikungunya.

Healthcare providers should be aware that post-hurricane environmental conditions may pose an increased risk for the spread of infectious diseases among patients in or recently returned from hurricane-affected areas; including leptospirosis, dengue, hepatitis A, typhoid fever, vibriosis, and influenza. The period of heightened risk may last through March 2018, based on current predictions of full restoration of power and safe water systems in Puerto Rico and USVI.

Cholera has not occurred in Puerto Rico or USVI in many decades and is not expected to occur post-hurricane.

Recommendations

These recommendations apply to healthcare providers who recently traveled in hurricane-affected areas (e.g., within the past 4 weeks), during the period of September 2017 – March 2018.

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- Healthcare providers are encouraged to ask patients about recent travel (e.g., within the past 4 weeks) to hurricane-affected areas.
- All healthcare providers should consider less common infectious disease etiologies in patients presenting with evidence of acute respiratory illness, gastroenteritis, renal or hepatic failure, wound infection, or other febrile illness. Some particularly important infectious diseases to consider include leptospirosis, dengue, hepatitis A, typhoid fever, vibriosis, and influenza.
- Healthcare providers should contact their local health department listed below if they need assistance with ordering specific diagnostic tests.
- For certain conditions, such as leptospirosis, empiric therapy should be considered pending results of diagnostic tests— treatment for leptospirosis is most effective when initiated early in the disease process. Providers can contact their local health department or CDC for consultation.
- Healthcare providers are strongly encouraged to report patients for whom there is a high level of suspicion for leptospirosis, dengue, hepatitis A, typhoid, and vibriosis to their local health department, while awaiting laboratory confirmation.
- Confirmed cases of leptospirosis, dengue, hepatitis A, typhoid fever, and vibriosis should be immediately reported to facilitate public health investigation and, as appropriate, mitigate the risk of local transmission.

For More Information

- General health information about hurricanes and other tropical storms: <https://www.cdc.gov/disasters/hurricanes/index.html>
- Information about Hurricane Maria: https://www.cdc.gov/disasters/hurricanes/hurricane_maria.html
- Information for Travelers:
 - Travel notice for Hurricanes Irma and Maria in the Caribbean: <https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/notices/alert/hurricane-irma-in-the-caribbean>
 - Health advice for travelers to Puerto Rico: https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/traveler/none/puerto-rico?s_cid=ncezid-dgmq-travel-single-001
 - Health advice for travelers to the U.S. Virgin Islands: https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/traveler/none/usvirgin-islands?s_cid=ncezid-dgmq-travel-leftnav-traveler
 - Resources from CDC Health Information for International Travel 2018 (the Yellow Book):
 - Humanitarian Aid Workers: <https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/yellowbook/2018/advising-travelers-with-specific-needs/humanitarian-aid-workers>
- Post-travel Evaluation: <https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/yellowbook/2018/post-travel-evaluation/general-approach-to-the-returned-traveler>
- Information about infectious diseases after a disaster: <https://www.cdc.gov/disasters/disease/infectious.html>
 - Dengue: <https://www.cdc.gov/dengue/index.html>
 - Hepatitis A: <https://www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/HAV/index.htm>
 - Leptospirosis: <https://www.cdc.gov/leptospirosis/>
 - Typhoid fever: <https://www.cdc.gov/typhoid-fever/index.html>
 - Vibriosis: <https://www.cdc.gov/vibrio/index.html>
- Information about other infectious diseases of concern:

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- Conjunctivitis: <https://www.cdc.gov/conjunctivitis/>
- Influenza: <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/index.htm>
- Scabies: <https://www.cdc.gov/parasites/scabies/index.html>
- Tetanus and wound management: <https://www.cdc.gov/disasters/emergwoundhcp.html>
 - Tetanus in Areas Affected by a Hurricane: Guidelines for Clinicians <https://emergency.cdc.gov/coca/cocanow/2017/2017sept12.asp>

Thank you for your partnership.

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Cowlitz County Health Department:	(360) 414-5599	(360) 425-7531
Skamania County Community Health:	(509) 427-3850	(509) 427-0188
Wahkiakum County Health and Human Services:	(360) 795-6207	(360) 795-6143