



14 January 2011

## **Taking care of yourself during the flood emergency**

Many general practices have been affected by the current flood emergencies. Doctors are banding together to provide medical services as best they can. To make sure medical services reach those who need them most in these early critical days, there are many ways how you can take care of yourself until normal medical services can be resumed.

### **Get your medicines, scripts and records ready to go**

#### **Put key medical information in your evacuation kit in advance**

If you have an existing medical condition or routinely take medication, ask your GP in advance for a copy of your health summary including a list of your current health problems, current medications, allergies and adverse drug reactions. Keep this information safe together with your prescriptions in your evacuation kit. If you need medical care during the flood emergency, this information will make it much easier for a treating doctor – who may not be your usual GP – to look after you. Don't forget your regular medicines and as-required medicines such as asthma inhalers.

### **Keep up your regular healthcare**

#### **Continue your usual medication**

If you normally take medication, make sure you keep taking it.

#### **Get emergency access to medication**

If you run out of medication and have lost your scripts, you can get a 3-day emergency supply without a script from a pharmacist. If you have lost your Medicare, DVA or Centrelink card, a pharmacist can assist you with any concessions you are entitled to.

#### **Continue important pathology tests**

If you normally have regular pathology tests (for example tests to check Warfarin levels or blood glucose levels) you should try your best to continue having these tests.

### **If it's not important right now, put it off**

Unless you need immediate medical care, please wait until normal medical services are resumed to see your doctor for **non-urgent** matters such as routine checkups or routine pathology tests (for example cholesterol levels).

### **Take special precautions against disease and injury**

#### **Make sure your drinking water is clean**

If you suspect water is contaminated – or if the authorities recommend it – you should treat water before drinking it to avoid the risk of gastric infections. For practical advice on how to treat contaminated water refer to the fact sheet

'*Ensuring safe drinking water*', which is available at

[www.health.qld.gov.au/healthieryou/disaster/documents/safedrinkingwater.pdf](http://www.health.qld.gov.au/healthieryou/disaster/documents/safedrinkingwater.pdf)



## **Wash your hands, wash your hands, wash your hands**

To avoid gastric infections, wash your hands with soap and clean water or disinfectant (e.g. alcohol wipes) before handling food or after any clean up activities.

## **Take action against mosquitoes**

If mosquitoes are a problem, wear insect repellent and suitable clothing.

## **Treat superficial cuts**

Wash superficial cuts with soap and clean water and apply a clean dressing. If a cut becomes red and painful or starts weeping, you should see a doctor. You may need to consider a tetanus vaccination.

## **Wear protective clothing**

If you are cleaning up debris, wear gloves and covered shoes to avoid injury.

## **Tread carefully**

Be extra aware of where you are walking to avoid injury from slippery and damaged surfaces. Watch out for snakes.

## **De-stress**

### **Talk to your family and friends**

You can help yourself de-stress by talking to family, friends and neighbours.

### **Take it one day at a time**

Though it may sound trite, it can be really helpful to take a 'one-day-at-a-time' attitude so you don't feel totally overwhelmed by the scale of the flood emergency.

### **Get help**

If you need expert help to de-stress down the track, there are many services you can access. Make sure you speak to your GP in the first instance. See the fact sheet on *Resources and support for coping with trauma and grief*, available at [www.racgp.org.au/disasterresources](http://www.racgp.org.au/disasterresources)

## **Stay informed**

For up to date information on staying healthy in a flood emergency check: [www.health.qld.gov.au/healthieryou/disaster/](http://www.health.qld.gov.au/healthieryou/disaster/)

For information about flood warnings check:

Queensland Government at [www.qld.gov.au/floods/](http://www.qld.gov.au/floods/)

NSW Government at [www.emergency.nsw.gov.au/content.php/886.html](http://www.emergency.nsw.gov.au/content.php/886.html)

Victorian Government at <http://www.floodvictoria.vic.gov.au/centric/home.jsp>