

# EXPOSURE TO SEWAGE CAN MAKE YOU SICK. LEARN HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF.

ALABAMA  
PUBLIC  
HEALTH

## WHAT IS SEWAGE AND WHY SHOULD YOU PROTECT YOURSELF FROM IT?

Sewage is mainly water containing poop and pee (urine) along with toilet paper or wipes that flows through a sewer system or septic tank.

Poop may contain harmful germs (bacteria and viruses), intestinal worms, and parasites. Sewage treatment reduces the water content and removes materials but does not kill or remove all of the germs, parasites, or worms.

## HOW CAN YOU BE EXPOSED TO SEWAGE?

Sewage can run out into the yard or land from

- Wastewater backing up from underground sewer pipes.
- Septic tank build up or heavy rains.

You can then be exposed to sewage if

- You put your hands in or close to your mouth when eating, drinking, and smoking.
- You wipe your face with dirty hands or gloves.
- Sewage gets into cuts, scratches, or wounds.
- You walk in sewage that has run out onto the ground.

## HOW CAN YOU GET SICK FROM SEWAGE?

Sewage contains germs like bacteria and viruses as well as parasites and worms that can cause stomach and intestine or liver illness.

- Germs and parasites may cause diarrhea, fever, cramps, nausea, vomiting, headache, weakness, or loss of appetite.
- Hepatitis A can cause liver disease; symptoms may include feeling tired, having pale poop, and having yellow eyes and skin.
- Roundworms cause coughing, trouble breathing, or pain in your belly and blocked intestines.
- Hookworms can cause a rash, stomach pain, diarrhea, loss of appetite, tiredness, and anemia.

## HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF FROM RAW SEWAGE



**DO NOT** touch your nose, mouth, eyes, or ears with your hands, unless you just washed them.



**DO NOT** let sewage get into open cuts, sores, or wounds.



**DO NOT** keep dirty work clothes with your other clothes.



**DO NOT** walk barefoot in the yard where the soil may be contaminated with poop.



Wash your hands well with clean water and soap before you eat or smoke, after using the toilet, and after working.



Keep your fingernails short. Use a stiff soapy brush to clean under your nails.



Wear waterproof gloves if you handle wastewater, sludge, or grit; or if you clean pumps or screens.



Shower and change out of any dirty clothes.



Talk to your doctor or nurse about any symptoms of being sick from sewage.



Seek appropriate treatment from your doctor if diagnosed with a bacterial or viral illness, parasite, or worm.



Keep up to date on all your shots. Hepatitis A shots are good to have.