

# Combined Sewer Overflow Event Safety

Prevent exposure to sewage contamination with these steps

## What is a combined sewer overflow event?

Both untreated wastewater, including sewage, and stormwater flow through the same pipes in a combined sewer system.

To avoid sewage from backing up into the basements of residences and businesses **during wet weather events**, relief points are in place to send untreated or partially treated sewage and stormwater to nearby waterbodies.

 During **dry weather**, all wastewater flows through pipes and gets treated at a wastewater treatment plant before entering a waterbody.

 During **wet weather** events like flooding, the sewer system can become overwhelmed due to the added volume of stormwater in addition to wastewater flowing through the pipes.

## Did you know?

Disease-causing germs may be in the untreated or partially treated sewage that gets sent to waterbodies during wet weather events. This can impact the safety of the water and soil in the nearby riverbanks and beachfronts for a short time. However:

- ✓ Recreating or working near the impacted water and soil for short periods of times will have a minimal risk to your health.
- ✓ Sun exposure and the natural flow of waterbodies will decrease the level of disease-causing germs in the water and soil.



A diagram showing the flow of sewage, wastewater, and stormwater in a combined sewer system during wet weather. Image courtesy of Environmental Protection Agency.

## How can I protect myself?



Wash hands with soap and water after touching soil and water, cleaning off soil, and before eating.



Avoid touching face, mouth, eyes, and nose. Keep open sores and cuts covered.



Clean soil from shoes, clothes, and equipment.



Keep pets away from and do not swim in affected areas. Use local [beach water advisories and closures](#) to guide when it's safe to recreate in the area again.