**Melioidosis**

Public Health Advice

Meliodosis is a potentially life-threatening infectious disease caused by the bacterium *Burkholderia pseudomallei*, a soil organism found ight across tropical regions.

This organism usually lives deep in the soil but comes to the surface when the soil is distrurbed by activities like gardening or excavation and by heavy rainfall and flooding. When there are flood waters the bacterium contaminates those waters, meaning many more people can be exposed.

**Melioidosis Can present in a variety of ways**

* Pneumonia, with or without sepsis, is the commonest presentation (fever, cough)
* Other presentations
  + Skin abscesses and ulcers
  + Abscesses of internal organs, particularly prostate, spleen., liver
  + Septic arthritis or osteomyelitis
* Neurological infection are uncommon but do occur

Melioidosis is rare in children in Australia.

**Risk Factors**

Most cases occur in those with underlying risk factors, the most important being:

* Poorly controlled diabetes
* Heavy alcohol consumption
* Chronic lung disease
* Advanced age
* Impaired immunity

Note: as the risk factors are common in Indigenous Australians, this group is over-represented in melioidosis cases.

**Prevention after Floods**

* Wear protective footwear when in muddy areas
* Wear gloves when cleaning up
* Wear face masks when cleaning up mud
* Cover any cuts or sores with waterproof dressings
* Wash thoroughly after exposure to soil or muddy water

If you have been in floodwater and you have a high fever and are very unwell, seek medical advice without delay.