General public health recommendations for the population in flood-affected areas

1. Ensure safe drinking water
Follow information from local authorities regarding whether the water is safe.
Until official confirmation of the safety of the water supply is received, use bottled water or water that has been boiled for at least 10 minutes.
The population in flood-affected areas is advised to use bottled water for drinking and cooking. If using drinking water from local water supply systems, as well as from individual or public wells, springs, or cisterns, it is recommended—as a preventive measure—to boil the water for drinking for 10 minutes.

2. Maintain personal hygiene
Avoid direct contact with floodwater and wash your hands regularly with soap and clean water. Use disinfectants as an additional protective measure.
Avoid contact with floodwater as it may be contaminated with waste materials, microorganisms, or chemicals that can have harmful effects on health.

3. Food handling
Discard any food that has come into contact with floodwater—it may be contaminated.
Before use, thoroughly wash food products (fruit and vegetables from greenhouses) with safe drinking water. Food should be prepared using safe water and must be properly thermally processed (cooked).

4. Prevention of rodents and mosquitoes
Floods can encourage mosquito breeding (stagnant water), and rodents may also appear—they can be carriers of diseases.
Although the number of mosquitoes is significantly reduced during this period, stagnant water should still be removed and the surroundings cleaned to prevent their occurrence during potential warmer days.
Pay particular attention to rodents (mice, rats), which often enter buildings after floods and during colder months in search of food and shelter. Store food in well-sealed containers. Regularly collect waste and keep it properly closed.
Eliminate damp and damaged materials in the home and surroundings—this prevents the development of mold and insects that can become active even in colder months.

From a public health perspective, it is recommended that local self-government units, in cooperation with the Centers for public health (CPH), after the water has receded and the soil in yards has dried, carry out thorough mechanical (physical) cleaning by removing 2–3 centimeters of the topsoil (silt) due to fecal contamination, and to implement disinfection, disinsection, and deratization (DDD) by an authorized public health institution (CPH) based on epidemiological indications.

5. Monitoring Health Status
Be alert to symptoms such as fever, gastrointestinal problems (e.g., diarrhea), and skin infections—these may be signs of diseases related to contaminated water.
Seek medical assistance immediately if symptoms such as fever, diarrhea, or skin infections occur.
It is necessary to ensure the presence of a doctor and a nurse in the areas most affected by flooding, in order to provide healthcare to all population groups, especially people with chronic diseases, those over 65 years of age, pregnant women, and young children.

The medical team should be equipped with the necessary medical supplies and medications for rapid field intervention.

6. Information and compliance with guidelines
Follow the recommendations of the competent authorities and act in accordance with their instructions.
Regularly monitor announcements from the relevant services—municipal authorities, the Center for public health, and water supply services.
Strictly adhere to all recommendations related to water use, movement in risk areas, and any protective measures.
The competent Centers for public health regularly monitor the situation in the field, maintain contact with general practitioners/infectious disease specialists, and regularly inform the Institute of public health about any potential increase in the number of diseases related to flood-affected areas, in order to take timely preventive and control measures.

Head of the Department of epidemiology of infectious diseases –
Dr. Dragan Kochinski
Institute of Public Health