

Husband fathers a child during couple's separation

DEAR ABBY: My husband and I separated last year and reconciled several months later. When we decided to get back together, he broke it off with his girlfriend. A month later she contacted him to inform him that she's pregnant with his child. She's due in a few months.

My husband and I disagree about how things should be handled when the child arrives. She says I'm not allowed to come to the hospital with him and meet the baby. I say that going without me is absurd, and any child that belongs to my husband is a part of my life, too. However, he says she is in charge of the situation. I'm worried that when the baby is born I'll be at home alone with a broken heart. Where should I draw the line with my husband?



DEAR ABBY

information if they would like to have it. I know this situation is delicate. I desperately want to avoid doing the wrong thing. Please advise.

— HEARTBROKEN IN FLORIDA

DEAR HEARTBROKEN: Your instincts are on target. The best way to accomplish what you have in mind would be to write to the adoptive mother and allow her to decide what to do with the information you give her. Most adopted children at some point want to know who their birth parents were, if only so they can get a complete medical history.

DEAR ABBY: I love my mother, but our relationship has been awkward since I came out to her when I was 13. After I told her I was gay, she grew more and more distant. She went into full grandma mode for my sister and her sons and, in my eyes, neglected me.

She was seldom home, and when she was, we would argue about everything. It got so bad that I left and moved in with my aunt, who was like a mom to me. My sister told me she thinks Mom is in denial because every time my sister would want to talk about it, Mom would clam up.

Mom and I have NEVER talked about it. I clearly recall the day I came out. When I told Mom, she said she already knew. Then she added, "It's just a phase."

I'm sad that even after 12 years she still hasn't accepted that this is who I am and who I have always been. It upsets me that she doesn't know all of me. Should I have a sit-down talk with her like the adults we are?

— SAME SON AS ALWAYS

DEAR SAME SON: Only you can make the decision to have that important conversation with your mother. Before you do, I'm advising you to contact an organization called PFLAG. PFLAG helps to build bridges of understanding between families and their LGBTQ members. You can find it by going online to pflag.org. If your concern is that your mother's position may force you to end your relationship with her, prepare in advance by making sure you have a loving support system around you.

Flooding poses potential risk for 1 million private wells

By Jim Salter
The Associated Press

ST. LOUIS — More than 1 million private wells that supply drinking water in mostly rural parts of the Midwest could face the risk of contamination from floodwater, posing a health concern that could linger long after the flooding subsides.

Major flooding along the Missouri and Mississippi rivers and several smaller waterways has inundated states in the middle of America, from the Canadian border south to Kentucky. The National Weather Service has warned that snowmelt in northern states only beginning, the threat of additional flooding persists well into spring.

The high water and swift current carries raw sewage from overburdened treatment plants, animal waste and pesticides from farm fields, and spilled fuel.

"Whatever was on the land is in the water now," said Steve May, assistant chief of the Missouri Bureau of Environmental Epidemiology.

Contaminated water can carry bacteria such as E. coli that can cause gastrointestinal illness, reproductive problems and neurological disorders, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Infants, young children, pregnant women, elderly people, and people with compromised immune systems are particularly vulnerable.

The National Ground Water Association, a trade

group for the industry that includes well systems, said there are 1.1 million private wells in 300 flooded counties in 10 states: Iowa, Nebraska, Missouri, Kansas, Illinois, Indiana, Wisconsin, Minnesota, South Dakota and Kentucky.

Stagnant water could linger for days or even weeks even as flooding starts to subside in hard-hit areas, raising the risk that some of it will get into wells by flooding over the top, seeping through cracks or as a result of other flaws in the well structure.

Liesa Lehmann, private-water section chief for the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, said her state has an estimated 700,000 to 800,000 private wells. The National Ground Water Association said the current flood poses a risk to more than 280,000 Wisconsin wells, the most in any state.

"Anyone who has a private well within a flood plain area of a major river, those wells are certainly going to be vulnerable to contamination," Lehmann said.

Drinking water comes from a variety of sources. Some public water supplies use rivers, streams, lakes or other bodies of water. Others use water from the ground. Either way, public water supplies are government-regulated and have safeguards to protect against contamination.

But the federal government estimates that about 15 million U.S. households — most often in rural areas that don't have access to public drinking water

systems — rely on private wells. Those wells are not typically regulated by the Environmental Protection Agency, so it's up to the well owner to make sure the water is clean.

Owners of private wells use a variety of methods to remove contaminants, including filtration systems, water softeners, distillation systems that boil out the impurities, and disinfectants such as chlorine. But if floodwater gets into a well, those efforts may not be enough.

Lehmann said well owners who see floodwater near or over their wells should assume the drinking water supply is contaminated. She encouraged them to watch for any change in the color, smell or taste of their water, and to consider alternatives such as bottled water.

Once flooding recedes, remaining well water should be pumped out and the well should be disinfected, said Chuck Job, regulatory affairs manager for the National Ground Water Association. Lehmann said that because the presence of so much water poses an electrocution risk, well owners should hire professionals to do the work.

Once the well is disinfected, water should be tested to make sure it's safe, Job said.

At least one state is offering free well-water testing in flooded areas. Missouri property owners seeking free testing must obtain collection kits from the Missouri State Public Health Laboratory and submit samples using those kits.

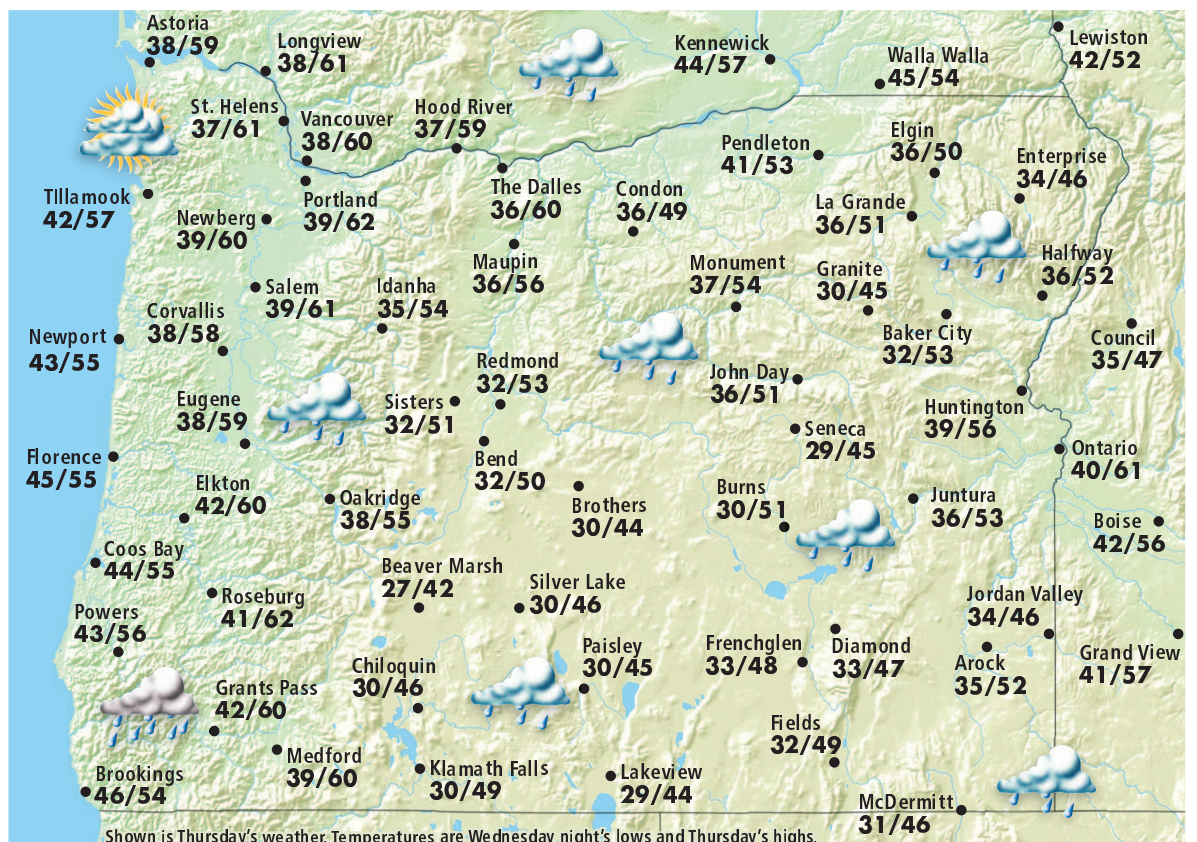
weather

Weather forecast grid for TONIGHT, THU, FRI, SAT, SUN with temperatures and comfort indices for Baker City, La Grande, and Enterprise.

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