



Flood! Restoring Your Home To a Sanitary Condition

What are the concerns?

There are several health and safety concerns after a flood:

- Flood water can carry sewage and other pollutants
- Sewer back-ups
- Mould will grow if surfaces in your home are wet for more than two days
- Insect and rodent breeding

Safety First

Care should be taken when reentering your home after a flood. Make sure the building structure is safe and watch for holes in floors, broken glass and other dangerous debris. Avoid electrical shock by wearing rubber boots in areas with more than 5 cm (2 in.) of standing water. Keep power cords out of the water and shut the power off to the flooded area at the breaker box, if it is dry.

Health Precautions

Treat all surfaces and furnishings that have been in contact with flood water as contaminated until properly cleaned. **Keep children and pets out of contaminated areas.** Do not track contaminated material into undamaged areas. Be sure to wear an N-95 mask, goggles, gloves, a long-sleeved shirt, long pants, and rubber boots when cleaning up after a flood.

Cleaning of House Contents

- Pump or remove all standing water, silt, mud, and sewage from the basement. If there is evidence of sewage, bag, tag, and dispose of as directed by municipal guidelines.
- Where practical and weather permits, all movable furnishings in contact with flood water should be taken outside. All woodwork and items of impervious material, plastics, and metal, should be cleaned with soap and water.
- Upholstered furnishings in contact with flood water should be dried outside, where possible, and professionally cleaned. Upholstered furniture, or stuffed articles in contact with raw sewage should be discarded.
- Carpets in contact with flood water should be professionally cleaned; sewage soaked carpets must be discarded.
- Linens and washable clothing should be rinsed and washed several times with detergent, then dried quickly.
- Discard and replace all insulation material, drywall (up to 500 mm or 20 inches above the high water line), mattresses, stuffed toys, pillows, padding and cushions that have been soaked.
- If there are large amounts of mould, hire a professional to remove it.

Environmental Health Awareness

- All surfaces and structures that have been in contact with flood water, should be washed with unscented detergent, then rinsed. **Use of bleach is not recommended.**
- Vacuum dry surfaces with a HEPA vacuum cleaner.
- Following clean-up, ventilate and/or dehumidify the house thoroughly.
- After the clean-up inside the house, effort should be made to remove the debris and flood borne materials from the yard. If there is much delay in disposing of such materials, the debris should be sprayed with an insecticide.
- To find out how to disinfect and restore wells, contact one of the offices listed below.

Throwing Out Food and Health Products

Any of the foods and other items listed below that are exposed to flood water must be thrown out.

- contents of freezer or refrigerator
- meats
- fresh fruit and vegetables
- boxed food
- bottled drinks and products in jars, including home preserves, spices, and condiments, since the area under the seal of jars and bottles cannot be disinfected adequately
- medicines, make-up and other toiletry items.

If there is any doubt as to whether a food item has been in contact with flood water, throw it out.

Canned foods without signs of damage to the seal or large dents can be salvaged if the can is washed well and then disinfected. Cans showing signs of leakage, bloating, or damaged seals, should be thrown out.

Wash your hands before handling any salvageable food products.

Other Kitchen Items

All contaminated dishes, utensils and food contact surfaces such as cutting boards and counter tops should be washed with soap and warm water and then sanitized with a bleach solution. Wooden utensils should be discarded.

Where can I find out more?

If you have any questions about flood damage, please do not hesitate to contact the Government Service Centre or Regional Health Authority nearest you.



**Department of Health and Community Services
Department of Government Services
Regional Health Authorities**

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Environmental Health Awareness