

Safe Cleaning After a Home Flood

What You Need to Know

Flood water in homes carries a variety of health hazards as it may contain sewage, mold, bacteria, viruses, and other hazardous disease-causing germs. Safety risks such as electrical shock or electrocution also may be present in flooded areas.

All objects and surfaces that come into contact with flood waters need to be cleaned, sanitized, or discarded. Make every effort to avoid flooded areas in the home until flood waters drain.

What precautions should I take to prepare for cleaning flooded areas in the home?

- Keep children, pregnant woman, people with health problems, and pets out of the affected area until cleanup is completed.
- Wear rubber gloves, protective clothes (preferably disposable), waders or rubber boots, and goggles. Cover all open cuts and sores with adhesive bandages.
- Be cautious of electrical outlets and gas lines. Have the Utility Service Department shut off the electricity and gas line if possible.
 - Do not handle any connected electrical cords or appliances if the current is still on. Get professional assistance before attempting to disconnect cords or open the fuse box in a flooded basement.
 - If electricity is connected to an appliance that has had the motor controls submerged, do not attempt to start it. Consult the appliance service company or dealer.
 - Use battery-powered flashlights in flooded areas. Never use matches, lighters, or lanterns in an enclosed area where gas could be present. Check all affected pilot lights or burners on gas-fired or oil-fired appliances before placing them back into service.
- While a basement is still flooded, avoid flushing toilets or using other plumbing fixtures whose discharge could cause toilet waste to discharge into the basement.

How should I clean areas after flood waters recede?

- Drain all flooded basements by natural drainage or by pumping.
- Wear rubber boots and waterproof gloves during cleanup.
- Wash or flush down walls and floors after the drainage or pumping process if possible.
- To clean walls, hard-surfaced floors, etc.:
 - Use plenty of soap or dishwashing products.
 - Use hot water if possible.
 - After thoroughly cleaning areas, disinfect by using eight (8) ounces or 1 cup of household bleach per 5 gallons of water. Let air dry.
 - Provide as much ventilation as possible by opening windows and using fans or dehumidifiers if electricity is available.
 - Destroy and discard all bottled goods sealed with crimped caps that were in the flood.

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How should I clean areas after flood waters recede? (continued)

- Discard clothing, carpets, upholstered furniture, toys, bedding, and similar items unless they are cleaned and disinfected. Wash all linens and clothing in hot water and detergent or dry clean them. Discarded clothing should not be left accessible to unauthorized scavengers pending pickup.
- Remove and discard contaminated household materials that cannot be disinfected, such as wall coverings, cloth, rugs, and drywall. Floors, walls, furnishing, carpets, utensils, and equipment damaged beyond salvage must be removed and replaced as necessary.
- Put movable objects outdoors to air dry, then spray thoroughly with a disinfectant. Some salvage agencies or companies are equipped to process contaminated material without hazard to employees or eventual customers.

After completing clean up:

- All clothing worn and exposed areas of the body must be thoroughly washed. Clothes, linens and cleaning rags should be washed separately from uncontaminated items.
- Prevent tracking of sewage into the living areas of the house.
- Wash your hands with soap and warm water. Boil water for 1 minute (allow the water to cool before washing your hands).

