



Health precautions after flooding

Flood waters may be contaminated by sewage, including from overflowing septic tanks. All items that have been in contact with flood waters should be treated with caution.

Here are some tips to help you to stay well following recent flooding in your home and neighbourhood.

General advice

- Most importantly, use basic hygiene. Always wash your hands with soap and water –
 - After handling items contaminated with flood water or sewage
 - Before eating or preparing food, and before smoking
 - After participating in flood clean-up activities
- Do not allow children to play in flood-affected areas until clean-up is complete. If children have been in flood-affected areas, make sure they wash their hands well afterwards.
- If you have any cuts or wounds that were in contact with flood waters, wash well with soap to prevent infection. Check with your family doctor, as you may need a tetanus booster, especially if the wound is deep. If any wounds develop redness, swelling or oozing seek immediate medical attention.
- Use rubber gloves, boots and eye protection while cleaning.
- Take photos of all damage prior to clean-up for insurance purposes.

Flood water contamination outside your house

- First priority should be to clear an access way to your dwelling, once things have dried out you can tackle the rest of your section.
- Contact the gas supply authorities if the gas meter has been affected by water or debris.
- Use a shovel to remove surface contamination. Place it at the edge of your section ensuring it does not block drainage channels.
- Do not eat raw vegetables from soil that has been submerged in flood water. Clean up and remove debris and sprinkle gardens with lime.
- Leave garden surfaces exposed to the air and sunshine to dry out naturally. Make drainage holes with a fork to aerate.
- Natural processes such as sun light, drying and wind, will make your outside areas safer over the short to medium term.

- Hard surfaces such as driveways can be cleaned and disinfected with bleach solution of 1 litre of household chlorine bleach in 10 litres of cold water (a household bucket). Leave on for 30 minutes before rinsing with water.
- You may have residual contamination from surface mud on the lawns and paths so always remove your shoes when entering the house.
- Always wash your hands on coming in from outside and before handling food.
- Small children should be kept away during the clean-up phase.

Flood water contamination inside your home

- Damaged pillows, mattresses and soft upholstered furnishings should be discarded.
- Get rid of contaminated clothing, sheets, toys, etc., unless they can be cleaned and disinfected. Clothing and sheets can be boiled. Items that cannot be boiled should be thoroughly washed using disinfectant. Other items of value such as drapes and blankets can be restored by dry cleaning.
- Contact an electrician before switching power on again if water has reached under-floor wiring or wall sockets. Electrical appliances such as refrigerators, freezers and heaters should also be checked by an electrician before re-use.
- Throw out all food that has been contaminated by floodwater, for example foodstuffs contained in bottles and jars with crown caps and foodstuffs that are not in waterproof containers. Frozen food which has thawed should also be discarded.

Drying out your house

- Take out all items that are wet and put them outside to dry when the weather is fine.
- Air out the rooms each day to help remove dampness.
- Use a dehumidifier in the living and bedrooms to keep the moisture levels down to a manageable level.

Removing mould

Residual dampness inside your home may lead to mould growth. Small amounts of mould can be removed using a mild solution of 1 litre household bleach in 10 litres of water. Wipe down walls, floors and other surfaces. Leave the solution on for 30 minutes then rinse with clean water. Don't forget to protect yourself by wearing gloves and avoiding splashes to the face and eyes. Keep windows open during the treatment.

Swimming beaches and other recreational water

After **any** heavy rainfall we advise that people should not swim or paddle in the water, or collect shellfish, for at least 48 hours after the rain stops.

Is the drinking water safe?

The Council monitors its drinking water supply on a regular basis and is required to warn people if it becomes contaminated. You can assume the water is safe unless you hear a public warning from the Council through their communication channels (social media, media release, local press, website, radio, community boards).

Links

Ministry of Health guidance on protecting your health in an emergency:

<http://www.health.govt.nz/publication/protecting-your-health-emergency>

For more information contact your Local Authority or Regional Public Health