



Floods – how to clean up your home safely

This leaflet provides important health advice and some basic precautions to keep you and your family safe while cleaning up your flooded home. Further general advice is available at www.gov.uk/phe.

Do not overdo it when cleaning up, and remember that tiredness, difficulty sleeping and anxiety are normal in these circumstances.

Starting off

- talk to your insurance company and follow their advice
- wear rubber boots, waterproof gloves and an apron to clean up. If cleaning causes a lot of water to splash from scrubbing, hosing or pressure-washing, wear a standard face mask, such as those sold by DIY stores. Goggles offer added protection and they can be reused after thorough washing
- remember to wash your hands thoroughly after each clean-up session. Keep open cuts or sores clean and use waterproof plasters to prevent them being exposed to floodwater
- take care with electrics and gas: Do not turn on gas or electrics if they may have got wet. Only turn them on when they have been checked by a qualified technician

How and what to clean

- wash clothes used for cleaning on a separate cycle from your other clothes
- clean all hard surfaces (eg walls, floors) with hot water and detergent
- clean and disinfect work surfaces, plates, pans, cutlery, chopping boards etc. before using them with food. If you have a working dishwasher, this is a more efficient way to clean and sanitise smaller items. Discard wooden chopping boards and wooden spoons if contaminated by floodwater
- wash soft items (eg clothing, bedding and children's toys) on a 60°C cycle with detergent. If you suspect problems with your drainage system, it is recommended that a launderette be used for washing large quantities of clothes and linens until your waste-water system has been checked

Drying out

- ensure good ventilation if using portable indoor heating appliances to dry out indoor spaces. Do not use petrol or diesel generators or other similar fuel-driven equipment indoors: the exhaust gases contain carbon monoxide, which can kill
- heating, dehumidifiers and good ventilation can also help dry out your home
- if you have gas or oil central heating and it has been checked by an engineer, turn it on. Keep the thermostat between 20°C to 22°C for steady drying
- if you have air bricks to any under floor spaces, ensure that these are unblocked to give cross ventilation to these areas. As floorboards and walls continue to dry out, any loose material and dust resulting from this should be vacuumed up on a regular basis
- when you can, remove dirty water and silt from the property including the space under the ground floor if you have wooden floors. This space may need pumping out
- mould should disappear as your home dries out but if it persists, contact a specialist cleaner
- place rubbish in hard bins or in rubbish bags
- dispose of dead rodents and pests in a plastic bag, wearing rubber gloves

Your local health services

Anyone with concerns for their health should contact their GP for advice, or call NHS 111. If you want to check that your scheduled appointment is unaffected (eg GP, outpatient, inpatient at local hospital), use the usual local telephone numbers for your health services. NHS Choices is also a good source of local health service information www.nhs.uk/service-search

The latest alerts and general flooding advice are provided by the Environment Agency www.environment-agency.gov.uk and Floodline (0345 988 1188 or 0845 988 1188).

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