



STATE OF OHIO

Emergency Operations Center

NEWS ADVISORY

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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HOW TO PROTECT YOUR HEALTH AFTER FLOODING

Cleanup

Recovering from a flood can be a long and strenuous process. It's important to practice patience and safety. Residents in flooded areas should take the necessary steps to help protect themselves and their families from both short- and long-term effects of flooding.

Anyone who receives a puncture wound or any wound contaminated with sewage, soil or saliva during cleanup should check with their physician to see if a tetanus booster is necessary, based on the person's vaccine history, the date of the last dose received and the type of injury.

Mold

Mold is likely to be a problem in flooded homes and has the potential to affect the health of all family members. All water must be removed and leaks fixed before cleaning.

- Clean hard surfaces with a bleach and water solution
- Make sure to ventilate the area when using chlorine bleach.
- Wear a filter mask and gloves to avoid contact with the mold.
- Let the bleach and water sit for 15 minutes and then dry the area thoroughly.
- Porous materials, such as carpeting, wallboard, insulation, wallpaper and furniture, which are wet and can not be cleaned or dried, should be discarded since they can be a mold source.

Simple ways to dry and clean your house:

- If the humidity outside is lower than indoors, and if the weather permits, open all doors and windows.
- Use fans to move the air and dry your home. Do not use central air conditioning or the furnace blower if the ducts were under water. They will blow dirty air that might contain contaminants.
- Use dehumidifiers and window air conditioners, especially in closed-up areas.
- Open closets and cabinet doors to let air circulate.
- Call a contractor who specializes in drying flooded buildings.

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Food Safety

Food that comes in contact with flood water can pose a serious health risk. The Ohio Department of Health (ODH) recommends throwing away any product if there is any doubt about its safety.

Eating food exposed to flood waters may cause serious illness or death. Throw away all food containers that are bulging, leaking or dented, even if no sign of a leak is obvious. Bacteria can pass through openings too small for liquids, so if you have any doubts, throw it away.

ODH also recommends throwing away home-canned goods if the tops have been exposed to flooding. Food in paper containers, cloth or cardboard packaging that has been exposed to the water should also be discarded, along with soft drinks and ketchup bottles using capped containers.

Commercially canned goods (those purchased at grocery stores) may be saved if they are disinfected prior to opening. Label the can with a waterproof marker, remove the paper label and wash the can thoroughly in hot, soapy water. Rinse well; after washing and rinsing can, disinfect it by soaking it for five minutes in a chlorine solution using one tablespoon of bleach (labeled 5.25 percent sodium hypochlorite) for each gallon of cool water.

Water Safety

If you have a private well, run cold water for about 30 minutes to allow the well to recharge naturally. Do not save the water. Then have the well disinfected and tested before drinking or using for cooking. If you are concerned about the safety of your tap water, boil it vigorously for at least three minutes. If you cannot boil it, add five drops of bleach to each gallon of water. Mix thoroughly and let stand for 30 minutes. This method should be used only with water that is clean in appearance and free of odors.

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More details are available in the Ohio Department of Health flood manual at:

<http://www.odh.ohio.gov/ASSETS/2B7647CF135C41978DB0DBF1DC794BC4/FloodManual.pdf>.