

## Cleaning Up After a Flood

When you get ready to clean up after a flood, remember that flood water may contain sewage and other contaminants.

- Keep kids and pets away from flooded areas until you've finished your cleanup.
- Wear rubber boots and waterproof gloves.
- Steam-clean all carpeting.
- Replace fiberglass insulation that has been exposed to flood waters.
- Wash walls and floors with a chlorine solution (1 cup of household bleach to 5 gallons of water). Rinse metal and wood surfaces with clean water after 10 minutes to avoid rusting or other chemical reactions.
- Use bleach or another disinfectant when laundering clothes, bedding, or other fabric items.



## More Information

### **About flood preparedness and response:**

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention  
<http://emergency.cdc.gov/disasters/floods/>

### **About food and water safety:**

US Food and Drug Administration  
[www.fda.gov/Food/ResourcesForYou/Consumers/ucm076881.htm](http://www.fda.gov/Food/ResourcesForYou/Consumers/ucm076881.htm)

### **About well water quality:**

US Environmental Protection Agency  
<http://water.epa.gov/drink/info/well/whatdo.cfm>

### **At the Health Department:**

Disease Control and Prevention Division  
406-447-8361  
Environmental Services Division  
(septic systems) 406-447-8351  
Water Quality Protection District  
(wells) 406-457-8927



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## Floods & Your Health



### A Public Health Guide

While the focus during flooding is often on protecting property, don't forget to protect the health and safety of you and your family.



**Lewis & Clark  
Public Health**

## Drinking Water

### Get Well Water Tested

Flood water is often contaminated with bacteria and other disease-carrying germs. If you have a private well, and if flood waters have reached your wellhead, your well water is likely to be contaminated, too.

To get your well water tested for contamination, contact one of these local laboratories:

- Alpine Analytical, 449-6282
- Energy Laboratories, 442-0711
- State of Montana Public Health Laboratory, 444-2642

Don't use contaminated water or questionable water for any domestic purpose such as cooking, drinking, bathing, brushing your teeth, or making baby formula.

### How to Disinfect Your Water

Use bottled water. If necessary, you can disinfect water that might possibly have been contaminated in one of two ways:

- Bring it to a boil and allow it to boil for 5 minutes, OR
- Mix it with household bleach at a ratio of 5 drops of bleach to 1 quart of water.

**For their health and safety,  
keep children from playing  
in flood water!**



## Bathing and Washing

### Cleanliness a Must

Because flood water is often contaminated with disease-carrying germs, it's very important to wash your hands after coming into contact with it -- especially before eating.

If your tap water isn't safe to use, wash your hands with soap and water that has been boiled or disinfected. You can set up a temporary hand-washing station by using a large water jug that contains clean water.

If soap and water aren't available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol. Keep in mind that hand sanitizers are not effective when hands are visibly dirty.

Bathe only when you're sure your water is clean and safe. Listen to local authorities for further instructions. Sometimes water that's not safe to drink can be used for bathing.

Avoid exposure to flood waters if you have an open wound.

## Food Safety

### Throw These Away!

Flood waters are contaminated with bacteria and other germs that can cause human illness. Destroy the following items if they have been exposed to flood waters:

- fresh meats and poultry
- fresh fruits and vegetables
- ready-to-eat foods
- lunch meats
- cheese
- home-canned foods
- medicines and cosmetics
- food packages that are not airtight
- flour
- packaged frozen foods
- other commodities in bags

### Disinfect These

You can salvage airtight packages and sealed metal cans in good condition (not leaking, bulging, or punctured). Just clean and disinfect them carefully before opening:

- Remove labels, but mark cans so you can identify contents after disinfection.
- Wash cans in warm, soapy water and rinse well.
- Soak cans for at least 2 minutes in a tub of disinfecting solution made by mixing 1 cup household bleach with 5 gallons water (2 tablespoons per quart). Wear waterproof gloves.
- Rinse cans in clear water that is bottled, disinfected, or otherwise safe to drink.