

## **Personal Hygiene**

It is critical to remember to practice basic hygiene during the emergency and clean up period. Wash hands thoroughly after handling flood affected items or after participating in any flood clean up activities.

Avoid all unnecessary contact with mud and floodwaters. Do not enter areas where there is mud, unless feet are covered. Always wear gloves when handling flood affected items or mud. Keep children out of flood affected areas.

Practice good personal hygiene. Avoid coughing or sneezing on others, avoid the use of common or unclean eating utensils, toothbrushes, towels, handkerchiefs and remember to wash hands in soap and clean water immediately after going to the toilet and always before handling or eating food.

All cuts and abrasions should be cleaned, treated with antiseptic and covered immediately. If you do have a deep cut or wounds or if wound has had contact with floodwaters or if any wounds develop redness, swelling or drainage, seek immediate medical attention.

Avoid being bitten by mosquitoes. Use an insect repellent on exposed skin areas and reapply every couple of hours. Cover up as much as possible with loose fitting light coloured clothing.

Should you or any of your family have severe diarrhoea or vomiting, please seek immediate medical assistance. If you have these symptoms, you'll need extra fluids to replace what you lose. The best fluids to take are those that contain a mixture of special salts (electrolytes) & sugars, e.g. Gastrolyte which can be purchased from local Pharmacies.

## **Drinking water**

Drinking water supplies can be affected by floods. If a 'boil water' alert has been issued in your area, observe it strictly. Water for eating and drinking should be held at a rolling boil for one minute. Under no circumstances should non-boiled water be consumed until the alert is lifted. When the 'boil water' alert is lifted, follow the water supplier's instructions about flushing the household water pipes.

If you are not sure about the quality of drinking water, contact your water supplier or local council.

## **Dangers of Contaminated Flood Waters**

During and after heavy rain, runoff from surrounding areas can affect water quality. This runoff may be stormwater or in some cases overflows of sewage. Swimming in contaminated water may cause illness including coughs and colds, ear infections, eye infections, fever and diarrhoea. The contamination of recreational waters can result in disease outbreaks and illness in the community. The greatest potential risk is posed by microbial contamination of the waters by organisms such as bacteria, viruses and algae. NSW Health recommends that you do not swim for three days in rivers, lagoons and estuaries affected by stormwater runoff.

**When cleaning up consider personal health, drink plenty of fluids - do not wait until you are thirsty. Take breaks when you can .**

**It is normal to feel a mix of emotions in emergency situations as part of the natural process of healing and these emotions should pass with time. If you experience a prolonged period of distress, please contact your local Doctor.**

### **Contacts**

SES 132 500

**Contact details**



**Health**  
Western NSW  
Local Health District

# After FLOOD Clean Up Advice

## COMMUNITY Information



### **Contact your local Public Health Unit**

Bathurst Office 02 6330 5880

Dubbo Office 02 6809 8963

Broken Hill 08 8080 1420

## House Clean Up Steps

- Electrical hot water systems which have been under water should be inspected by an electrician. Similarly, any gas appliances, gas bottles or electrical appliances affected by floodwaters should be inspected by a licensed tradesman for safety before use.
- Whilst cleaning up in and around houses, wear suitable protective clothing, e.g. boots, gloves etc and be wary of snakes and rats.
- Wash out mud, dirt and debris from your house with a hose, starting at the highest point and working down to ground level.
- Yards should be raked to remove debris. If necessary, hose down yard, apply lime and wet down. Lime can be obtained from your local hardware store.
- Take out everything that is wet and that can be moved, e.g. floor coverings, furniture, bedding, linen and clothing. A decision should be made whether to keep carpet, rugs, mats and other floor coverings. If floor coverings are removed, the floor underneath should be thoroughly cleaned and dried before any new material is laid.
- Start drying out the house as soon as floodwaters recede. On dry days keep all doors and windows open to assist with drying. Fans may also help. Attempt to drain water away from under the house, and try to increase the airflow there to assist drying. Check for trapped water or mud in walls or floor cavities.
- Mould or mildew may develop if items are not completely dried. Mould or mildew may be removed with household bleach however the strength of the product may ruin some household items.

All equipment or surfaces that have been affected by floodwaters need to be cleaned, e.g. empty refrigerators and cupboards. Hard surfaced floors, walls, benches and sinks should be thoroughly cleaned with hot soapy water and then disinfected by wiping or spraying surfaces with a chlorine bleach solution (see below) or a product labelled as a disinfectant. Once disinfected allow to dry. Always wear gloves and protective clothing and do not touch face or eyes while using disinfectants.

To make up a 10 litre bucket (standard size) of disinfectant, add water and one of the following;  
25-50mls (quarter of a cup) of ~4% (strength) available chlorine (e.g. household bleach)  
**OR**  
8-16mls (dessert spoon) of 12.5% (strength) available chlorine (e.g. liquid pool chlorine)  
**OR**  
1.5-3grams of 65% (strength) available chlorine (e.g. granular pool chlorine)  
Always follow safety advice on labels.

Linen, blankets and clothing should be washed in hot water (if instructions allow) or dry cleaned.

Flood affected mattresses are difficult to treat. Foam rubber mattresses may be thoroughly washed with a garden hose. A detergent solution should be squeezed through the mattress and then the mattress allowed to dry in open sunlight. Other types of mattresses or furniture such as lounge chairs are difficult to re-condition, but could be air dried in the sun then sprayed thoroughly with a disinfectant solution or check with a commercial renovating company.

If power is cut for more than a couple of hours, foods in fridges and freezers will spoil. The consumption of unsafe food may cause serious illness.

Perishable foods, e.g. Dairy products, meat, poultry, prepared foods etc should be disposed of if un-refrigerated for more than four (4) hours. Frozen foods, if thawed should be consumed within 24 hours or disposed of. If any food has been covered by floodwaters it should be discarded. ***If in doubt, throw it out.***

If you suspect damage has occurred to your septic tank, have it professionally inspected and/or serviced. Contact your local Council for the names of pump-out operators or service technicians within your area.

To avoid creating mosquito breeding sites, remove from your yard all water holding rubbish, empty out pot plant bases and try to encourage drainage from your yard.

If you use a water bore or well for domestic purposes and that bore has been inundated with floodwaters, you should purge the bore three (3) times the volume of the bore before using the water. If you have continued concerns about the quality of your bore water, please contact your local Council.

Dead animals should be disposed of by burial or cremation on rural properties, or contact your local Council regarding other options for disposal.

## Children's Toys

Toys that are soft or made of moulded plastic with air injection holes that have been affected by flood water should be discarded. Solid toys should be washed and disinfected.

## Farm Chemicals

If you have any concern about flood affected farm chemicals, contact your local Fire Brigade.