



Flooding can happen without warning and when we least expect it. There are potential health risks associated with contaminated flood water such as the spread of gastroenteritis (diarrhoea and vomiting). The information below should be useful to help protect the health of you and your family and whānau during and after a flood event.

Personal Safety and Hygiene

Always assume that **all flood water is potentially contaminated** with farm run-off, faecal matter from animals, and sewage. **Children in particular must keep away from flood waters.**

The best advice is to keep away from flood waters, use only a clean water supply for drinking, cooking, and washing. **Hand washing is always vitally important** to help prevent the spread of disease.

Hands must be washed with soap and water and dried properly after any contact with flood water, flooded property, after going to the toilet, and before preparing or eating any food.

Food Safety

- > Always wash hands with clean water and soap **before and after preparing food.**
- > **Do not eat foods that may have gone off.**
- > Use clean water to wash vegetables and fruit. **If you are unsure if the water is clean, boil water for at least 1 minute**, then cool.
- > **Do not eat garden produce if the soil has been flooded** as the food may be contaminated.
- > If the power is cut off, use the food in the refrigerator first, then food in the fridge-freezer, then food in the chest freezer. **Get rid of all foods needing refrigeration when they have been unrefrigerated for more than two hours.**

Drinking Water

If a 'boil water' notice is issued, then water needs to be boiled before drinking. This means that **the water needs to be brought to a rolling boil for at least 1 minute** before it becomes safe to drink.

Sanitation

In some emergency situations the water supply may be cut off, or water and sewage lines may be damaged, and you may need to use improvised emergency toilets.

How to make an emergency toilet with a container:

- > Use a watertight container such as a rubbish bin or bucket, with a snug-fitting cover.
- > Pour or sprinkle a small amount (such as a teaspoon full) of regular household disinfectant or bleach into the container after each use to reduce odour and germs. Keep the container covered.
- > If you need to store the waste before it can be disposed of, place it in a larger container with a snug-fitting cover until services are restored and it can be disposed of in the usual way.

Flood-Damaged Houses and Buildings

Where a home, office, or retail premises has been affected by flood water above floor level, **all soft furnishings will need to be effectively decontaminated or disposed of.** This includes carpets, curtains, furniture, and any other fittings. In some cases thorough cleaning followed by exposure to sunlight will be sufficient, but some furnishings and fittings will have to be thrown out. Each situation needs to be assessed individually. Anything that is discarded should be disposed of appropriately rather than leaving it lying around for weeks.

Other Health Concerns

Anyone experiencing any illness should consult their family doctor as usual or **Healthline on 0800 611 116.**

For more information visit www.ttophs.govt.nz/flooding