

# Flooding

## Precautions to take following Flooding

### General Advice on Protecting Against Infection

Although floodwater and sewage can leave a muddy deposit, past experience of flooding and sewage contamination suggests that the risk to health is small. There is no need for booster immunisations or antibiotics. Health risks should be minimised when cleaning up by wearing protective clothing e.g. strong gloves. Consider your own and others health and safety from increased slipping hazards etc. Hands should be washed with soap and clean water after going to the toilet, prior to eating and preparing food, and after contact with floodwater, sewage or items that have been contaminated by these.

Children should not play in floodwater areas. Their hands should be washed frequently and floodwater-contaminated toys should be washed with hot water or be disinfected before use. Open cuts or sores should not be exposed to flood water. Bacteria such as E. coli O157, Salmonella or Campylobacter may be present in floodwater—although in a substantially diluted form. Those who develop diarrhoea/vomiting following direct contact with floodwater should seek medical advice.

If floodwater contains oil/diesel, it can be removed by using a detergent solution and washing the surface down after initial cleaning is completed. It is possible that an odour problem may arise if diesel, oil etc are present in inaccessible areas.

The Social Services Department may be able to help elderly and vulnerable people who return to their houses following flooding. If illness occurs, the doctor should be informed that the home was flooded.

### Gardens and play areas

Sunlight and soil should help destroy harmful bacteria and any additional risk to health should disappear completely within a week or so. Waterlogged garden equipment should be cleaned and allowed to dry out before further use.

### Inside the home

All furnishing and fittings that are damaged beyond repair should be removed. Dirty water and silt should be removed from the property, including from the space under the ground floor if the floors are wooden. Clean and disinfect all hard surfaces until visually clean following the manufacturer's instructions. Isolate the electrical supply.

## Clothing and bedding

All affected clothing, bedding and other soft fabric items should be laundered on a hot wash. Other soft furnishings that cannot be laundered should be professionally cleaned or disposed of.

## Returning to the home

The house should only be fully reoccupied once the above cleaning regime has been followed. The property should be well ventilated and heated. Ensure a competent person makes the electrical supply safe.

## Food Preparation and storage

Food should be destroyed if it has come into contact with sewage or floodwater. Hands should always be washed before and after preparing food. All surfaces that food will come into contact with, including shelves in fridges, should be disinfected using a "food safe" disinfectant such as Milton, Dettol or similar. Food should not come into contact with surfaces that are damaged. Food that is eaten raw should be washed with boiled water that has been allowed to cool. If the food is to be cooked, it is safe to use unboiled tap water. Caterers should seek advice from Environmental Health Officers. Opened food should be kept in an enclosed box or tin. Frozen food that has thawed should be disposed of. Attempts should not be made to salvage damaged food, including tins, as it may be contaminated with sewage and chemicals left from the floodwater.

## Contaminated drinking water

Follow the advice of the local Water Company to determine the safety of the water supply. Water companies are required to take all necessary steps to protect public health. Alternative supplies are usually available if a water treatment works becomes flooded, although companies may advise consumers to boil water before drinking or to temporarily stop using water for domestic purposes. Water from private supplies should be boiled until the water is tested and shown to be safe. The Environmental Protection Section should be contacted to arrange for samples to be taken.

**Free Internet access is available at all South Gloucestershire libraries**

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