



Drinking Water and Food Guidance After a Flood

Drinking Water

Contaminated water can make you sick. Microorganisms in the water can cause diarrhea, vomiting, abdominal cramps, or other symptoms.

How to know if water is safe for drinking or using

- Your local health department will issue water advisories if your public water supply has been affected.
- If your well has been covered over with floodwaters, it should be assessed, repaired, and disinfected before use. See *Testing and Restoring Your Private Well after a Flood* www.health.ny.gov/FloodHelp.

Where to find water for drinking, cooking and food preparation (potable water)

- Use bottled water certified for sale in New York State, water from a state certified tanker, or from an approved public water system.
- Follow local officials' water usage restrictions to conserve water.

If you cannot find potable water, here are methods to disinfect and make water potable

You should always disinfect water of unknown quality before using it for drinking, food preparation, or personal hygiene.

Before using either of these disinfection methods, let suspended particles settle to the bottom, or strain the untreated water through layers of paper towels, clean cloths, or paper coffee filters.

- It is best to bring water to a rolling boil for one minute and let it cool OR, if boiling is not possible:
 - Add 1/8 of a teaspoon or eight drops of unscented liquid chlorine bleach per gallon of water. Stir and let stand for 30 minutes. If the water does not taste and smell of chlorine at that point, repeat process and let stand for another 15 minutes.

If your area was on a boil water notice and you are notified that you no longer need to boil your water, flush your pipes and water equipment with clean water before resuming use.

Food Guidance

Wash your hands with soap and clean water. If you do not have clean running water, use water that has been boiled and cooled, or disinfected before preparing or eating food.

Avoid eating contaminated foods; when in doubt, throw it out!

Discard:

- Food if there is any chance it has come into contact with floodwaters.
- Food containers with screw-caps, snap lids, and home canned foods if they have come in contact with floodwaters.
- Food cans that are swollen, rusted, seriously dented, or whose contents cannot be identified.
- Moldy foods or foods with an unusual odor or appearance.
- These foods **IF** they have been above 40 degrees Fahrenheit for over two hours:
 - Meat, poultry, seafood, meat substitutes
 - Pizza with toppings, lunchmeats
 - Casseroles, stews, soups, cooked vegetables
 - Milk/cream, yogurt, soft cheese
 - Mayonnaise, tartar sauce, creamy dressings
 - Cooked pasta, potato, rice, (salads containing these foods)
 - Refrigerator and cookie dough
 - Fresh eggs, egg substitutes
 - Custards and cream-filled pastries
 - Gravies

How to clean and disinfect commercially canned food, dishes, utensils, and cookware:

1. Remove labels from cans.
2. Wash in soapy potable water and rinse.
3. Disinfect with solution of one tablespoon of unscented household bleach per one gallon of water and air dry.
4. Re-label cans, including expiration date.

Other Related Publications

Carbon Monoxide: Know the Hazards

Carbon Monoxide: The Silent Killer

Don't be Left in the Dark

Flood Cleanup and Home Repair

Restoring and Testing Your Private Well After a Flood

Flooding Quick Reference Guide

Checklist and Resources for Repairing Your Flooded Home

How to Avoid Getting Sick and Injured After a Flood

How to Use an N95 Mask

Mold and Your Home: What You Need to Know

What Homeowners Need to Know

about Fuel Oil Spills and Flooding



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of Health**

www.health.ny.gov/FloodHelp