

# How to Avoid Getting Sick & Injured After a Flood

## Wear personal protective equipment

- Rubber boots
- Waterproof gloves
- Use a respirator (N95) that covers the nose and mouth. This protects you from mold and dust by filtering out 95% of airborne particles. For other types of protection, see the NYS Department of Health publication *"How to use a Disposable Respirator."*

## Avoid injuries and infection

- Stay out of floodwaters.
- Bathe with clean water and change wet clothes if you have been in floodwaters.
- If you already have open cuts or sores, thoroughly wash them with soap and clean water. If you see redness, swelling, or oozing, immediately seek medical attention.
- You may need a tetanus shot if you have not had one in the last ten years.
- If you get new cuts or puncture wounds seek medical attention.
- Be sure your water is safe to drink.
- Avoid eating or drinking anything that has been contaminated with floodwaters. See NYS Department of Health publication *"Drinking Water and Food Guidance after a Flood."*
- Don't try to move large objects by yourself. Items are much heavier when wet.
- Watch out for fatigue. When your body is tired, you are more prone to accidents. Set a realistic schedule for the work you will do each day. Rest frequently or when tired.

## Be careful re-entering your home

- Wait for the water level to go down.
- Walk carefully around the outside of your home checking for loose power lines and gas leaks. Call your utility company to report damaged power lines or gas leaks.
- Check for structural damage.
- Do not go into a flooded basement as there may be a risk of electrical shock.
- If you were not able to turn off electricity before the flood, refer to Red Cross publication *"Repairing Your Flooded Home"* to safely turn off electricity.
- Turn off gas or fuel if advised to do so.
- Air out building to remove escaping gases.

## Clean safely

Bacteria and mold brought into the home during flooding may present a health hazard. Coming into contact with air or water that contains these organisms can make you sick. Be sure to wear proper gear that will prevent you from coming in contact with floodwaters or sewage: rubber boots, waterproof gloves, and an N95 respirator mask.

Before removing all or part of walls or floors, check if lead or asbestos-containing materials (paint, plaster, pipe wrap) could be disturbed. You may need to take steps to prevent the spread of lead dust or asbestos fibers. Call professionals if you suspect the presence of lead or asbestos. Many houses built before 1978 contain lead-based paint. Be sure asbestos removal is done by certified contractors.

**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 you prepare or eat food,
- After using the toilet,
- After participating in flood cleanup activities,
- After handling articles contaminated with floodwaters or sewage.

**Prevent carbon monoxide poisoning:**

- Never run generators in indoor spaces such as garages, basements, porches, crawlspaces, or sheds, or in partly enclosed spaces such as carports or breezeways. Generators should only be operated outside, far away from and downwind of buildings.
- Never use a gas range or oven for warmth.
- Never use a charcoal grill, barbecue grill, or campstove in the home or garage.
- Never start up or run any gasoline powered engines in enclosed spaces.

**Other related NYS Department of Health publications: [www.health.ny.gov](http://www.health.ny.gov)**

Carbon Monoxide: Know the Hazards

Carbon Monoxide: The Silent Killer

Don't be Left in the Dark

Drinking Water and Food Guidance after a Flood

Flood Cleanup & Home Repair

Flood Recovery - Sampling and Restoring Private Wells after a Flood

Flooding Quick Reference Guide

Health Checklist for Repairing Your Flooded Home

How to Use a Disposable Respirator

Information about Mold

Residential Oil Spills and Flooding

**American Red Cross: [www.redcross.org](http://www.redcross.org)**

Repairing Your Flooded Home