

Flash Floods – Protecting Your Health

Flash floods can occur when heavy rain cannot drain away quicker than it falls. Flash flooding typically occurs over a localised area for a short duration of time.

There is a risk of flash flooding in the ACT. In the event that you or your property are affected, this fact sheet will provide guidance on how to avoid disease transmission and other health risks.

Clothing and Personal Protection Equipment (PPE)

- Wear suitable protective clothing when cleaning, including covered shoes (ideally rubber boots), waterproof gloves, and eye protection. This will reduce the likelihood of contracting diseases such as tetanus or gastrointestinal infections.

Personal Hygiene and Safety

- Wash hands with soap and water after touching flood water and mud, going to the toilet, and before eating or making food.
- Cover any wounds, cuts or abrasions with band aids.
- Stay out of recreational water sites for at least two days after flash flooding. If in doubt, call Access Canberra for further information on 13 22 81.

Cleaning

- Assume anything that came into contact with flood water is contaminated. There is a risk that sewage overflow may have also occurred.
- Keep pets and children away from contaminated areas until the areas have been properly cleaned.
- Open doors and windows to increase ventilation and remove dampness.
- Clean all hard surfaces (floors, walls, benches), utensils and crockery, and outdoor play equipment. Use hot water and household detergent, disinfectant with a bleach-based sanitiser, and a final rinse with clean water.
- Clean all absorbent household materials (mattresses, furniture, rugs, linen, children's soft toys). Materials should be either dried in the sun and cleaned, or thrown out if soiled and cannot be cleaned.
- If mould is present, use a household detergent or a white vinegar solution.
- If yards are contaminated with mud from flash flooding, let the mud dry out before using the yard.

- Disinfect cleaning mops, brooms, and brushes with bleach after clean-up.
- Clean and dry dirty footwear and wash your clothes separately after clean-up.

Food Contamination

- **IF IN DOUBT, THROW IT OUT.** Food should not be eaten if it has an unusual smell, colour, or texture.
- DO NOT eat food that has been in contact with floodwater.
- Throw out perishable refrigerated food if the power has been off for more than 4 hours.
- If frozen food thaws, either cook it immediately and eat it, or throw it out.
- Canned foods are safe to eat if the cans are sealed and undamaged. If the can is open, bulging or damaged, throw it out.

Waste Disposal

- Dispose of perishable wastes, such as foods and other organic waste that may decompose, in a sealed bag for collection.
- Contact Access Canberra on 13 22 81 for further information on waste disposal, including additional rubbish collections for your area.

For Further Information

- For emergency help in floods, call ACT State Emergency Service on 132 500.
- If you or anyone in your family feels unwell, seek medical advice from your local doctor.
- Further information on food contamination, mould or asbestos is available on the ACT Health website.

Accessibility

If you have difficulty reading a standard printed document and would like an alternative format, please phone 13 22 81.



If English is not your first language and you need the Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS), please call 13 14 50.

For further accessibility information, visit: www.health.act.gov.au/accessibility

www.health.act.gov.au | Phone: 132281 | Publication No XXXXX

© Australian Capital Territory, Canberra Month Year