

TIP SHEET FOR FLOOD CLEANUP

In addition to wiping out roads, buildings and homes, massive flooding can result in unanticipated hazards from tainted floodwaters. Germs and mold thrive in moist environments, posing potentially serious hidden health risks that could compound the more obvious dangers of flooding. Risks from exposure to waterborne germs carried by floodwater include fever, gastrointestinal difficulties, diarrhea and stomach aches, dysentery and hepatitis. The good news is there are ways to help you reduce the health risks associated with flooding.

Keep these tips in mind while beginning the cleaning process:

- If an item got wet, assume it is contaminated.
- Disinfecting works best when all loose dirt and debris are removed first.
- Use a simple disinfecting solution [3/4 cup of regular strength (6%) chlorine bleach to 1 gallon of water] to disinfect walls, floors and other surfaces touched by floodwaters. Keep the area wet for at least two minutes, then rinse thoroughly and dry.
- When addressing exterior surfaces, such as outdoor furniture, patios, decks and play equipment, keep surfaces wet for 10 minutes (this may mean wetting the surface more than once), then rinse thoroughly and dry.
- Chlorine bleach solutions degrade quickly — be sure to make a fresh solution daily as needed.
- Contaminated clothing should be washed in the hottest possible water with detergent and chlorine bleach if fabric instructions permit.
- When using a disinfecting solution to clean up after a flood, remember to:
 - Wear gloves and protective clothing. Do not touch your face or eyes.
 - Change the disinfecting solution often and whenever it is cloudy.
 - Be thorough. Wash and dry everything well.
 - Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, even if you have worn gloves.

For more information, visit
www.waterandhealth.org

