



Cleaning Up After a Flood: Children's Health

How to Clean Household Items Contaminated by Floodwaters

Drinking Water Containers:

Clean thoroughly with soap and water, then rinse. For gallon-sized containers, add approximately 1 teaspoon of bleach to a gallon of water to make a bleach solution. Cover the container and agitate the bleach solution thoroughly, allowing it to contact all inside surfaces. Cover and let stand for 30 minutes, then rinse with potable water.

Kitchenware and Utensils:

In general, metal and glazed ceramic that are thoroughly washed and dried can be sanitized and kept. Wood items must be thrown away, as these items can absorb contaminants or grow mold from the exposure to flood water and they cannot be properly sanitized.

Children's Toys and Baby Items:

Throw away ALL soft or absorbent toys because it is impossible to clean them and they could harm your child. Throw away ALL baby bottles, nipples, and pacifiers that have come in contact with flood waters or debris.

The Mount Sinai Region 2 Pediatric Environmental Health Specialty Unit (PEHSU)

is available to assist with concerns related to children's safe return and can be contacted at 1-866-265-6201.

In formerly flooded or debris-filled areas, children may be at risk of exposure to dirt and debris that potentially have been contaminated with hazardous chemicals like lead, asbestos, oil and gasoline. Since children are different from adults, they may be more vulnerable to chemicals and organisms they are exposed to in their environments. Children can be exposed by direct contact through their skin, by breathing in dust particles or fumes, or by putting their hands in their mouths. It is critical to ensure the safety of living and learning environments prior to children's return. Due to these concerns, children should not directly be involved in clean-up efforts.

Drinking Water:

While all people need safe drinking water, it is especially important for children because they are more vulnerable to harm from contaminated water.

- If a water source may be contaminated with flood waters, you and your family should drink only bottled water, which should also be used to mix baby formula and for cooking.
- We also recommend you sponge bathe your children with warm bottled water until you are certain your tap water is safe to drink.

Mold:

Some children are more susceptible than others to mold, especially those with allergies, asthma and other respiratory conditions. To protect your child from mold exposure:

- Clean smooth, hard surfaces such as metal and plastics with soap and water and dry thoroughly.
- Discard flood damaged items made of absorbent materials such as carpets, padding, curtains, clothes, stuffed animals, paper, upholstered items, etc. If there is a large amount of mold, you may want to hire professional help to cleanup the mold.

Bleach:

Household bleach contains chlorine, a very corrosive chemical which can be harmful if swallowed or inhaled. It is one of the most common cleaners accidentally swallowed by children. Children, especially those with asthma, should not be in the room while using these products. Call Poison Control at (800) 222-1212 immediately in case of poisoning.

Homes or apartments that have sustained heavy water damage will be extremely difficult to clean and will require extensive repair or complete remodeling. We strongly advise that children not stay in these buildings.

Carbon Monoxide:

ALERT: Generator exhaust is deadly. Always put generators outside well away from buildings.

For more information contact:
George Zachos, Regional Public Liaison
888-283-7626

<http://www.epa.gov/sandy>

Or Visit: <http://yosemite.epa.gov/ochp/ochpweb.nsf/content/flood.htm#household>