

PREVENTING & REMOVING MOLD GROWTH AFTER A FLOOD

Why Are Flood Waters So Bad?

Flood waters are heavily polluted with **viruses, bacteria, parasites**, and when building materials and furniture become wet with flood waters, extensive **mold growth** can be expected to follow. Failure to remove contaminated materials and to reduce moisture and humidity can present serious long-term health risks such as respiratory disease and allergic reactions. Mold may also damage building materials long after the flood.

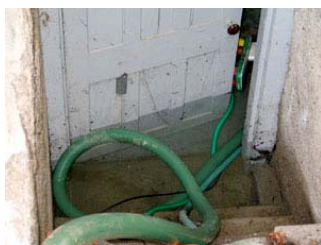
Safety Tips!



- Before entering your home make sure it is safe. Do not allow children into the house or yard until everything has been cleaned and disinfected.
- Make sure the gas and electricity is shut off before checking for flood damage.
- Wear protective clothing when cleaning up. This includes coveralls, rubber boots, gloves, and protective face mask to prevent breathing in fine water droplets and dust.

What Should You Do First?

- Your first priority should be to **remove all standing water** as quickly as possible. This water is contaminated and can cause mold to grow as well as increase the chance infectious disease.



- Be careful not to remove water too quickly, this may weaken your foundation. Use the following steps to safely remove flood water from your basement:
- If the water level inside is above 1 metre (3 feet), pump it down to 1 metre and wait 24 hours. If the water level rises, pump it down to 1 metre and wait another 24 hours. Do this until the water level stops increasing. Remove the remaining 1 metre of water.

Look in the yellow pages under Fire and Water Damage Restoration, Dehumidifying, or Pumps, for contractors who specialize in cleanup of flooded buildings. Be cautious of contractors who request full payment in advance.

What Should You Do After The Water Has Been Removed?



- You should begin to dry out your house as soon as possible by reducing the humidity. The longer moisture remains in your house, the more likely you are to experience mold growth and structural decay. Use the following techniques to speed up the drying process:
- **Open the house** – If the weather permits, open all windows and doors to allow the drier outdoor air to exchange with moist indoor air.
- **Expose (open up)** – Allow drier air to contact hard to reach surfaces such as under carpets, inside cabinets, behind drawers, etc.
- **Use portable fans** – Fans help to circulate drier air with a house (do not use built-in ventilation systems until the ducting has been cleaned).
- **Use dehumidifiers** – Moisture is removed from the air at a faster rate.
- **Use a desiccant** – Desiccants are materials that absorb water from the air and are useful when drying out hard to reach enclosed spaces. These can be purchased from most hardware stores.

What Do I Do With The Items In My House?

- It may be unhealthy to keep items covered by flood waters. **Absorbent items** such as insulation, carpets, upholstered furniture, and mattresses that have been affected by flood water or sewage back up should be **discarded**. Smaller items may be saved if they can be laundered properly.
- **Nonabsorbent items** and building materials may be saved only if they were exposed to clean rainwater or water from leaking pipes. However, if items are not dried within 48 hours or you see evidence of mold, they should be discarded.
- All drywall affected by floodwater *should* be cut out and replaced 1-2 feet above the highest water mark. Also replace affected insulation and ventilation filters.





How Do I Clean Other Affected Areas In My House?

- For surfaces such as walls, floors, closets, shelving, etc., the cleanup process involves the following 3 steps:
 - **wash** with soap and clean warm water
 - **rinse** with clean water
 - **disinfect** with a bleach solution (½ cup bleach to 9 litres water)
(Caution: bleach may permanently discolour some items)
- If there is already a lot of mold (area is greater than 30 to 100 sq feet) or mold growth is persistent and returns after cleaning, we recommend looking in the yellow pages for professional restoration contractors and environmental consultants.
- For moldy concrete surfaces that are difficult to clean, you can scrub with trisodium phosphate (TSP) solution, available at your local hardware store.

Carefully follow all labeled instructions for any chemical product you may use!

For more information contact:

- Calgary Health Link at 943-LINK or 1-866-408-LINK
- City of Calgary at **311**
- www.calgaryhealthregion.ca/envhealth