

Family and Consumer Sciences

FOOD AND WATER SAFETY AFTER A FLOOD

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Flood waters can make food and water unsafe. Not all food and beverage items can be saved. When in doubt, throw it out! The following information was obtained from FDA (www.fda.gov) to help you keep your water and food safe after a flood.

Keep Water Safe

Follow these steps to keep your water safe during and after flooding.

- Use water from a safe source for drinking and washing or preparing food.
- Use bottled water not exposed to flood waters, if available.
- Boil or disinfect water to make it safe if you do not have bottled water. (See steps below)
- Contact your local or state health department or Extension agent for advice if you suspect your well may be contaminated. If the well has been flooded, the water should be tested and disinfected.

How to Boil or Disinfect Water to Make It Safe

If the water is cloudy, first filter it through clean cloths, or allow it to settle and then draw off the clear water for boiling/disinfecting. Then follow either boiling or disinfecting procedures.

Boiling

Boiling water will kill most types of disease-causing organisms that may be present.

1. Boil the water for one minute.
2. Let it cool and store in clean containers with covers.

Disinfecting with Bleach

In an emergency, it is safe to drink water that has been disinfected with bleach until regular water service is available again. Bleach will kill

some, but not all, types of disease-causing organisms that may be in the water.

1. Locate a fresh liquid bleach that has been stored at room temperature for less than one year. Do not use scented or color-safe bleach or bleaches with added cleaners.
2. Add 1/8 teaspoon (or eight drops) of unscented household (5.25 percent concentration) liquid bleach for each gallon of water. The label may say the active ingredient contains 6 or 8.25 percent of sodium hypochlorite.
3. Stir well and let stand for 30 minutes before using. The water should have a slight chlorine odor. If it doesn't, repeat the dosage and let stand for another 15 minutes before using. If the chlorine taste is too strong, pour the water from one clean container to another and let it stand for a few hours before use.
4. Store disinfected water in clean containers with covers.

Keep Food Safe

Do not eat any food that may have come in contact with flood or stormwater. Discard food or beverages:

- With an unusual odor, color or texture.
- Not in a waterproof container.
- In cardboard containers, including juice/milk/baby formula boxes.
- In containers with screw caps, snap lids, crimped caps, twist caps, flip tops and snap tops.

Food and Water Safety After a Flood

- Canned at home because they cannot be disinfected.
- In cans that are bulging, opened or damaged. Throw out cans of food or food containers that spurt liquid or foam when you open them or contain food that is discolored, moldy or smells bad.

How to Save Undamaged Food Packages Exposed to Flood Water

Undamaged, commercially prepared foods in all-metal cans and metal pouches (like flexible, shelf-stable juice or seafood pouches) can be saved.

Follow these procedures:

1. Remove the labels, if possible.
2. Brush or wipe away any dirt or silt.
3. Wash the cans and pouches with soap and safe water, using hot water if it is available.
4. Rinse the cans or pouches with water that is safe for drinking. Sanitize cans and pouches by immersion in one of the two following ways:
 - Place in water and allow the water to come to a boil and continue boiling for two minutes.
 - Place in a solution of 1 cup (8 ounces/250 mL) of unscented household (5.25 percent concentration) bleach mixed with 5 gallons of water and soak for 15 minutes.
5. Re-label cans or pouches with a marker. Make a note about expiration dates for food quality.
6. Air dry cans and pouches for a minimum of one hour before opening or storing.
7. Food in washed and sanitized cans or pouches should be used as soon as possible.

Baby Formula Tip

Try to use prepared, canned baby formula that requires no added water. Otherwise, dilute cleaned and sanitized all-metal containers of concentrated baby formula with clean drinking water.



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