

## Stay safe and healthy during flood recovery

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Following the initial damage to property and infrastructure, flood water that has receded can still cause death, sickness and injury.

The main health risks while in flood-impacted areas include:

- injury, such as falls, skin lacerations or snake and spider bites
- skin infections and sunburn
- mosquito-borne infections

Follow these safety tips to stay safe and healthy during the clean-up and flood recovery.

### Preparing to clean-up

- Wear protective clothing, such as sturdy footwear, loose long-sleeved shirts and trousers, thick gloves, hat and sunglasses.
- Muddy surfaces can be extremely slippery resulting in falls that can cause fractures and other injuries. Good shoes can help, but also consider using a walking pole or similar, such as a piece of smooth timber (e.g. broom handle or a piece of tree branch).

### Working safely onsite

**Don't walk or wade through floodwater, if you can avoid it.**

- There is an increased risk of wound infections, dermatitis, conjunctivitis, and ear, nose and throat infections from polluted waters. Leptospirosis, melioidosis, and diarrhoeal diseases can also be contracted from flood waters.
- Young children, the elderly, pregnant women, people with chronic diseases such as diabetes and kidney disease and people who abuse alcohol or other drugs are more prone to infections and should consider avoiding all flood water and mud.

### Wash your hands and keep wounds covered

- Wash your hands with soap and water or hand sanitiser after contact with flood water or mud, going to the toilet, and before making or eating food.
- Protect your skin from cuts which could become infected by contact with flood water.
- Clean and disinfect all wounds and keep them covered. Consider avoiding all flood water and mud if you have broken skin or wounds, especially if you have diabetes or other chronic diseases. Wounds heal most quickly if the limbs are rested and elevated.
- You may need to consider a tetanus vaccination. If you have any doubts about whether you are fully vaccinated, contact your nearest health provider or call 13HEALTH (13 43 25 84) to speak with a health professional.

### Watch out for snakes and mossies

- Watch out for snakes and spiders that may have hidden inside houses or debris as the flood water rose.
- Sandflies and mosquitoes may become a real nuisance as floodwaters recede. Wear long sleeves and long pants and apply insect repellent.

## Be careful of contaminated water

- Don't drink floodwater or tank water which may have been contaminated by flood water. Your council will alert you if the local water supply is contaminated. If in doubt, bring water to a rolling boil for at least 1 minute and cool before drinking.

## Starting the clean-up

- Wear waterproof gloves, rubber boots and eye protection such as sunglasses.
- Dry out the flood affected house or building as quickly as possible by opening all the doors and windows. If possible use fans to speed up the process.
- Clean walls and floors with soap and water.
- Clean food contact surfaces (benches and fridges) with soap and water and then disinfect using a solution consisting of one cup of bleach to a bucket of clean water.
- Clothes should be washed with hot water and disinfectant and then thoroughly dried.
- Discard items that cannot be washed and disinfected. Remove and discard absorbent household materials such as mattresses and upholstered furniture.
- Ignore mould growth until the area is completely dry and then remove with a chlorine bleach solution (approximately one cup of bleach in four litres of water).
- Only handle wet asbestos cement debris and ensure it is double bagged or covered with plastic sheeting prior to removal. Asbestos debris should be separated from general flood damaged debris and placed on the kerb side or inside the premises for collection by local council as appropriate. Contact your local council for more information on asbestos waste collection procedures. You can clean asbestos wall or roof surfaces with general hoses or by hand. Painted asbestos surfaces in good condition are less likely to release asbestos fibres and can be cleaned with a slightly higher water pressure.

## Throw out any unsafe food

- If the power is off for more than 24 hours, and the freezer has not been stocked with ice, food will start to spoil and should be eaten immediately or thrown out.
- Throw out any food that has been in contact with flood water.
- Throw out any food that has started to spoil, especially if it smells bad, tastes strange or is slimy. If in doubt throw it out!

## For more information

- Call 13HEALTH (13 43 25 84) to speak to a health professional
- Visit [www.health.qld.gov.au/healthieryou/disaster](http://www.health.qld.gov.au/healthieryou/disaster)
- Visit [www.brisbane.qld.gov.au](http://www.brisbane.qld.gov.au) or call 3403 8888 for Brisbane City Council updates
- Contact your nearest Queensland Health public health unit (Monday to Friday only):

<b>Brisbane North</b>	Tel: 3624 1111	<b>Gold Coast</b>	Tel: 5668 3700	<b>Rockhampton</b>	Tel: 4920 6989
<b>Brisbane South</b>	Tel: 3000 9148	<b>Hervey Bay</b>	Tel: 4120 6000	<b>Sunshine Coast</b>	Tel: 5409 6600
<b>Bundaberg</b>	Tel: 4150 2780	<b>Logan</b>	Tel: 3412 2989	<b>Toowoomba</b>	Tel: 4631 9888
<b>Central West</b>	Tel: 4920 6989	<b>Mackay</b>	Tel: 4885 6611	<b>Townsville</b>	Tel: 4753 9000
<b>Cairns</b>	Tel: 4226 5555	<b>Moreton Bay</b>	Tel: 3142 1800	<b>West Moreton</b>	Tel: 3413 1200
<b>Charleville</b>	Tel: 4656 8100	<b>Mount Isa</b>	Tel: 4744 9100		