



Public Health  
England



Environment  
Agency

**FLOODS**  
**DESTROY**  
**DESIRE**  
**BE PREPARED**

## Flooding: Advice for the Public

This document contains advice on:

- planning for flooding before it happens,
- what to do during a flood,
- recovering and cleaning up after a flood

Public Health England has more information about health and flooding: [www.hpa.org.uk/Flooding](http://www.hpa.org.uk/Flooding)

The Environment Agency has more information about flooding: [www.environment-agency.gov.uk/homeandleisure/floods/](http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/homeandleisure/floods/)

The Food Standards Agency has more information about food safety during flooding: [www.food.gov.uk/policy-advice/microbiology/flood](http://www.food.gov.uk/policy-advice/microbiology/flood)

This document has been prepared by Public Health England in collaboration with the Environment Agency (England) within the EU project Public Health Adaptation Strategies to Extreme weather events (PHASE contract number EAHC20101103).



For more information call: Floodline 0845 988 1188 for flooding; NHS '111' for non-urgent health concerns; Food Standards Agency 020 7276 8829 for food safety.

# Think about flooding before it happens

Your local authority or the Environment Agency can tell you about the dangers of flooding where you live. Find out **BEFORE** a flood happens.



If available for your neighbourhood, **sign up for free flood warning messages** from the Environment Agency to receive phone, text or email messages about when flooding is expected.

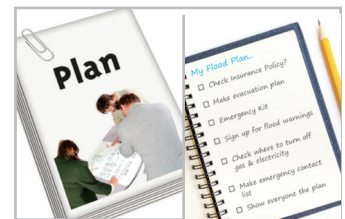


**Know what the levels of flood warning mean:**

- **Flood Alert:** Flooding is possible. Be prepared
- **Flood Warning:** Flooding is expected. Immediate action required
- **Severe Flood Warning:** Severe flooding. Danger to life



**Make a personal Flood Plan** for what you will do if there is a flood. Advice on how to make a plan and a self-complete template is available from the Environment Agency website.



**Prepare your home** in case there is a flood. Advice on how to reduce damage (e.g. flood proofing, flood boards and airbrick covers) is available from the Environment Agency website.



Buy **flood insurance** to protect your home and your belongings.



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# If a flood has been forecast

If flooding has been forecast where you live, listen to local radio or check the Environment Agency's website for updates and news.

Phone Floodline or your local authority if you have questions.



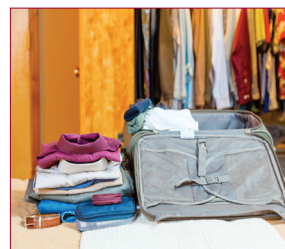
**Pack a “flood kit”** in case you need to leave your home.



Phone numbers, insurance documents, bank cards and money



Medicines and medical devices, hearing aid batteries, glasses and contact lenses



Clothing, toothbrush and personal items



If you have a baby, pack nappies, clothing and baby food

**Know how to turn off your gas, electricity and water** before flood water enters your home.

Phone your local suppliers if you are unsure how to do this.



**Be careful not to hurt yourself** when preparing your home and moving important things to a higher place.



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# During a flood

**Accidents happen in fast flowing floodwater. Avoid walking or driving in or near floodwater.** Driving in floodwater significantly increases risk of drowning. Do not let children play in floodwater.



**Move your family, pets and floodkit to a high place** with means of escape.

Stay safe, listen to the advice of the emergency services and evacuate when told to do so.



**Don't touch sources of electricity** if you are standing in water



Remember that **flooding is stressful**. It is normal to feel anxious or upset.

**Take care of yourself and your family** and **check on elderly and vulnerable** friends and neighbours.



**Avoid contact with floodwater and wash your hands regularly.**

Swallowing floodwater or mud can cause diarrhoea, fever or abdominal pain. **Mention the flood if you see your GP within 10 days for abdominal complaints.**



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# After a flood

**Take care if you must go into flood water.** There could be hidden dangers like sharp objects, raised manhole covers and pollution.



Ensure good ventilation if using portable indoor heating appliances to dry out indoor spaces. **Do not use petrol or diesel generators** or other similar fuel-driven equipment indoors: the **exhaust gases contain carbon monoxide, which can kill.**



**Do not turn on gas or electrics if they may have got wet.** Only turn them on when they have been checked by a qualified technician.



**Feeling tired, anxious and having difficulty sleeping is normal after you have been flooded.**

Contact friends and family for support as it can take a long time for life to return to normal.



Phone your water company or local authority to **ask if your water is safe** to drink and wash in.



# After a flood

For **food safety advice** after flooding, including **how to make baby food** without mains water, contact the Food Standards Agency.



**Do not eat food that has touched flood water** and don't eat fresh food from the fridge or freezer if your electricity has been turned off.



**Wash your hands regularly** and **clean work surfaces before and after preparing food.** If water is not available use hand sanitising gel or wet wipes.



Make sure your family take their **medicines** and attend **scheduled medical appointments.**

**Dial '111' if you have non-urgent health concerns.**



Stay with friends or family, or ask your local authority to help you **find alternative accommodation if your home has been damaged by floodwater.** Only return to your home when essential repairs and cleaning have been completed.



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# Cleaning up after a flood

**Call your insurance company** as soon as possible and follow its advice.

**Take photographs** before you start cleaning and ask your insurer before discarding items that cannot be cleaned (eg mattresses and carpets).



**Wear rubber boots, gloves and masks to clean up.**

Wash clothes used for cleaning on a separate cycle from your other clothes.



Clean all **hard surfaces** (eg walls, floors) with **hot water and detergent**.

Wash **soft items** (eg clothing, bedding and children's toys) on a 60°C cycle with detergent.



Place **rubbish** in hard bins or in rubbish bags. Dispose of **dead rodents and pests** in a plastic bag, wearing rubber gloves.












**Heating, dehumidifiers and good ventilation** can help dry out your home.

Mould **should disappear** as your home dries out but if it persists, contact a specialist cleaner.



# Useful local phone numbers

Please write your local phone numbers in the space provided for easy reference in the event of a flood.

 <p>council</p>	Local authority	
	Local police	
	Gas and electricity company	
	Insurance company and policy details	
 <p>GP Surgery</p>	Doctor	
	Electrician	
	Gas safe engineer	
	Plumber	
	Builder	

Public Health England is committed to producing widely accessible public materials and the format of this leaflet has been prepared in consultation with Improving Health and Lives, the Learning Disabilities Public Health Observatory.



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