

A flooded home needs to be cleaned up safely

Mold is common in houses that have flooded. Mold can grow when water gets trapped in buildings and houses. If the home has been wet for more than 24 hours, assume mold is present even if you cannot see it.

Mold can affect indoor air quality and make you sick. It can cause a stuffy nose, sore throat, coughing or wheezing, burning eyes, or skin rashes. Some people, especially those with asthma or mold allergies, may have severe reactions. Learn more about mold at MDHHS's [All About Mold webpage](https://www.michigan.gov/mold) (URL: Michigan.gov/Mold).

Also, be aware that sewage or dangerous chemicals could be in standing water after a flood. Polluted water may have backed up into the house from flooded sewers and may contain bacteria, viruses, or parasites.

To clean up safely, wear the proper gear and use appropriate cleaning products. Use regular, unscented bleach, soap and clean water to clean and sanitize undamaged food cans (free of punctures and dents), toys, and hard surfaces, such as countertops and dishes.

You can also use bleach and water to kill mold. Follow the CDC's guidance on how much bleach to use for different surfaces at the page on [Household Cleaning and Sanitation](https://www.cdc.gov/householdcleaning) (URL: bit.ly/CDC-Sanitizing-with-Bleach). Make sure there is good ventilation when cleaning with bleach.

For more information on cleaning and sanitizing after an emergency, visit the CDC page on [Hygiene in an Emergency](https://www.cdc.gov/hygiene) (URL: bit.ly/CDC-hygiene) and [Clean Up Safely After a Disaster](https://www.cdc.gov/disasters/cleanup/facts.html) (URL: [CDC.gov/disasters/cleanup/facts.html](https://www.cdc.gov/disasters/cleanup/facts.html)).

Never mix bleach and ammonia. Serious injury or death may occur. Keep cleaning materials away from children and pets.

What to wear while cleaning up after a flood:

- N-95 respirator.
- Protective gloves.
- Goggles or eye protection.
- Long-sleeved shirt.
- Long pants.
- Waterproof boots.



Who should not enter a home with mold damage?

- Children.
- People with asthma or other breathing problems.
- People with weakened immune systems.

Extreme weather events affect mental health



Extreme weather events can affect the mental health of people with preexisting conditions, as well as people without any history of mental health conditions. Mental health impacts, such as anxiety, depression or post-traumatic stress, can last for a brief time or continue for months or years after a flood. For more information, check out the CDC's page on [Coping with a Disaster or Traumatic Event](https://www.emergency.cdc.gov/coping/index.asp) (URL: [Emergency.cdc.gov/coping/index.asp](https://www.emergency.cdc.gov/coping/index.asp)) and the American Psychiatric Association's [How Extreme Weather Events Affect Mental Health](https://www.psychiatry.org/pressroom/2017/07/2017-07-20) (URL: bit.ly/APA-Weather).

Know your state, local and federal resources

[Local Weather Forecast Offices](#) (WFOs) (URL: [Weather.gov/srh/nwsoffices](https://www.weather.gov/srh/nwsoffices)) of the [National Weather Service](#) (URL: [Weather.gov](https://www.weather.gov)) issue advisories and warnings.

Stay Informed



Flood Advisory: Be Aware. Issued when flooding is expected to cause inconvenience, but not expected to be threatening to life or property. Could be minor flooding of low-lying areas and streets.

Flood Watch: Be Prepared. Issued when conditions are favorable for rapid flooding. It means it is possible that flooding will occur.

Flood Warning: Take Action! Issued when flooding is occurring or imminent.

Flash Flood Warning: Take Action! Issued when a flash flood is occurring or imminent. If you live in a flood prone area, move to higher ground. A flash flood is a sudden, violent flood and may even occur in areas not receiving rain.

Get alerts

- Learn about your community's emergency plans, warning signals, evacuation routes, and locations of emergency shelters. Visit [211-Michigan](#) (URL: [Mi211.org](https://www.mi211.org)) or call your local health department to find out more about emergency planning in your area.

Explore Michigan data

- Visit the [MiTracking Program site](#) (URL: [Michigan.gov/mitracking](https://www.michigan.gov/mitracking)) and select the "Explore Data" button for Michigan data on how precipitation (e.g., rain, snow) is changing. For precipitation data, select the "Environment" category, "Climate Change" content area, and "Extreme Precipitation" indicator.
- Visit the [Michigan Climate and Health Adaptation Program \(MICHAP\)](#) (URL: [Michigan.gov/climateandhealth](https://www.michigan.gov/climateandhealth)) to find more about how extreme weather events like flooding can impact human health.

More resources

- [Coping with Disaster](#) (URL: [Mhanational.org/coping-disaster](https://www.mhanational.org/coping-disaster)).
- [Michigan State Police MIREADY Program](#) (URL: [Michigan.gov/miready](https://www.michigan.gov/miready)).
- [Michigan Prepares: Floods](#) (URL: [Michigan.gov/michiganprepares/be-informed/floods](https://www.michigan.gov/michiganprepares/be-informed/floods)).
- [Septic Systems: Hurricanes and Flooding](#) (URL: bit.ly/NEHA-Septic).

References

1. NOAA National Centers for Environmental Information. (2022). *State Climate Summaries-Michigan*. Retrieved from <https://statesummaries.ncics.org/chapter/mi/>.
2. CDC. (2021). *Flood Safety Tips*. Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/nceh/features/flood-safety/index.html>.

Questions about this fact sheet? Call 800-648-6942.

Prepared by the [Michigan Climate and Health Adaptation Program \(MICHAP\)](#)

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