

Use precautions when cleaning flooded homes

(<http://www.albertahealthservices.ca/2042.asp>)

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Heavy rainfall across southern Alberta last week has resulted in basement flooding in residences and has prompted a caution from Alberta Health Services to use proper techniques for clean up.

“The water that seeps into your basement may be contaminated and, obviously, the sewer that backs up into homes is not safe,” said Dr. Vivien Suttorp, Medical Officer of Health. “I also want to caution people about allowing their children to play in the water that has built up on residential streets and in fields. This water may also be contaminated.”

Tips for safe cleanup of flooded areas:

- **Food:** All food in contact with flood water should be discarded. Only metal cans that are undamaged can be used after they are washed in a detergent or chlorine solution.
- **Flooring:** Soaked carpets should be removed and professionally cleaned or discarded. Flooring underneath should be dried out as soon as possible, and then cleaned and sanitized before replacing flooring. Sheet flooring should be cleaned and sanitized as soon as possible if in good condition, or removed if it is in poor shape or difficult to dry quickly.
- **Walls:** As soon as possible, drywall or paneling should be removed up to 1 to 2 feet above the flood-line. All insulation should be removed and discarded and the cavity should be dried as quickly as possible.
- **Appliances:** Large appliances that have been partially submerged (washing machines, dryers, freezers, etc.) should be serviced or professionally cleaned if there is any concern about internal contamination.
- **Furnaces and Hot Water Heaters:** If these have been partially submerged, they should be professionally serviced and cleaned.
- **Electricity:** When working in flooded areas, ensure breakers are off and appliances are unplugged.

For cleaning the areas mentioned, a warm water/mild detergent should be used and then areas should be sanitized with a one to 10 bleach/water solution. It is important to dry all areas out as soon as possible to prevent mould and mildew problems.