



# THE CITY OF NEW YORK

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND MENTAL HYGIENE

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## Cleaning Up Your Home After Flooding and Sewage Backups

Flooding from the recent rain storm has caused some sewage backups in parts of New York City. Simple methods can be used to clean and disinfect affected areas in homes and buildings. Most surfaces and items can be salvaged safely using the guidelines below.

### **Are there any health risks associated with contact with sewage?**

Sewage contains germs that may primarily cause stomach or intestinal infections if splashed onto open skin, eyes, or mouth but also may infect a cut on the skin or other open areas such as the eyes.

- Discard any food items, including packaged food, that were in contact with sewage water.
- There is no risk from drinking water in the area since flooding and sewage overflows have not affected water supplies.
- Keep children, pets and people with compromised immune systems away until the area has been cleaned and disinfected.

### **How can I protect myself when cleaning up sewage backups?**

- Avoid splashing onto face and other direct contact with sewage.
- Wear waterproof gloves.
- If wading in deep water, wear waterproof boots to protect feet and legs.
- Wash your hands, body and clothing with soap and water after cleanup.

### **What is the best way to clean floors, wooden furniture and other surfaces?**

- First, remove visible contamination with detergent and water.
- Second, disinfect by wiping surface with a bleach solution. Use one cup of household bleach in a two gallon bucket of water. Non-bleach sanitizers can also be used.
- **Warning: Never mix bleach with ammonia or detergents containing ammonia products. Dangerous fumes may be created.**
- Third, allow surfaces to dry thoroughly to avoid mold growth.
- Most waterproof boots and gloves can be disinfected with bleach solution, rinsed and allowed to dry after use.

### **What is the best way to clean clothing, bedding and other porous items?**

- Normal laundering with detergent and bleach (or non-chlorine bleach) will disinfect most items. Pre-rinsing with cold water can remove soiling and prevent staining.
- Dry thoroughly.
- Dry cleaning will generally disinfect clothing.

- Leather shoes may be difficult to disinfect, if heavily contaminated it may be best to discard.
- Valuable paper items and photographs may require cleaning by a professional trained in conservation methods.

**How can rugs and carpeting be cleaned?**

- Rugs with small spills may be cleaned in place using detergents and disinfectants.
- Always dry thoroughly and quickly.
- Larger areas of contamination should be cleaned by a professional.
- Discard contaminated rug padding.

**How can I prevent mold growth?**

- Dry all cleaned areas and items quickly and thoroughly.
- Use fans to air out your home and reduce odors.
- Do not run any electrical equipment or appliances near standing water.
- If available, a dehumidifier will help to dry out enclosed spaces.
- Discard items that cannot be cleaned and dried within 24-48 hours.
- Extensive flooding damage may require cleanup and restoration by professionals.

Additional information on cleaning mold and mold health effects may be found at:

<http://home2.nyc.gov/html/doh/html/epi/epimold.shtml>