

Cumbria Flood Factsheet

Public health information

Stay safe and protect against infection

The main health hazard in floods come from the stress and strain of the event and clean-up. Take time to look after you and your family's mental health and wellbeing. Do not overexert yourself in the clean-up.

What's the best health advice – isn't there a risk from bugs in the water?

Infection problems arising from floods in this country are rare. Usually any harmful bugs in floodwater become very diluted and present a low risk, but there are a few precautions to be aware of when dealing with flooding which should prevent unnecessary additional health problems:

- 1. General hygiene and safety precautions should be taken.** When cleaning up use waterproof boots and protective gloves. Keep any open cuts or sores clean and prevent them being exposed to floodwater - wear waterproof plasters if you can.
- 2. Always wash your hands with soap and clean water after going to the toilet,** before eating or preparing food, after being in contact with flood water, or soiled items.
- 3. Don't allow children to play in**

floodwater and wash children's hands frequently (always before eating). There may be no need to throw away household items as long as they can be properly cleaned.

- 4. Clean and disinfect all hard surfaces,** walls, furniture, pans, plates and cutlery with hot soapy water or kitchen disinfectant until they look clean. Powerful disinfectants, such as strong bleach are not necessary and may be harmful to surfaces.
- 5. Remove and dispose of all soft furnishings** and fittings that are damaged beyond repair. Clothing, bedding and other soft articles including children's toys should be washed on a hot wash (60° C or the highest temperature indicated on washing instructions). This will destroy most germs that may be present.
- 6. Other soft furnishings** that have been soiled and cannot be put in a washing machine will need to be professionally cleaned - if this is not possible, they may need to be disposed of.
- 7. Take care with electrics and gas.** Do not switch on electrical appliances that have been in contact with floodwater unless a competent electrician has checked them, as there is risk of electrocution. Even if gas appliances appear to be working normally, the flue or ventilation systems maybe affected. For safety reasons have appliances inspected by a Gas Safe

Register engineer (call 0800 408 5500 for advice). Don't use any outdoor cooking equipment such as barbecues inside your house again be aware of toxic fumes and fire risk.

8. There is also a serious danger posed by carbon monoxide fumes from the indoor use of generators and other fuel-powered equipment, such as driers. Remember that petrol or diesel generators and other fuel-driven equipment should NEVER be brought indoors. If you are using a fuel driven generator or other fuel driven equipment this should be properly sited outdoors. However, if you experience dizziness, headaches or disorientation, switch off appliances, move to a well-ventilated area and seek medical advice.

9. It is recommended that you only fully re-occupy your home once cleaning has been carried out. There may also be additional works to be done as advised by your insurance company, housing officer, landlord, builder etc.

10. Keep yourself and your family safe - don't try to undertake any difficult or dangerous work yourself - replacing roof tiles and checking electrical or gas safety should be done by qualified professional.

Further flooding health advice can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/flooding-health-guidance-and-advice>