



# RETURNING HOME SAFELY AFTER FLOODING

Keep yourself safe and healthy, with these simple checklists.



# Flood-damaged areas pose risks to your health.

Flood water can carry raw sewage and disease, cause mould, and turn food into sources of dangerous bacteria.

## BEFORE RETURNING HOME

**! Do not return home until your local municipality and/or authorities announce you are permitted to do so.**

- Check with your municipality and/or local utility providers to determine whether power, gas, water and sewage services are working.
- Remember to confirm that drinking water is safe from the tap, and that there are no boil water orders in place. If your drinking water is from a private well, visit [www.alberthearthservices.ca/flood](http://www.alberthearthservices.ca/flood) for post-flood considerations.
- Check with your municipality about collection or disposal of flood-damaged items, as well as any changes to routine garbage collection services.
- Seek guidance from your municipality about pumping floodwaters from your house, including where you should pump the floodwater, and any other pumping restrictions.
- Remember: gas-powered pumps should NOT be used indoors, as they can emit potentially deadly carbon monoxide. Electric pumps also should not be used.
- Remember: water must be removed from your flooded home slowly. If the ground is still saturated and water is removed too quickly, the walls or floors of your house could buckle.
- Use appropriate personal protective equipment for all clean-up activities, including:
  - Puncture-proof and water-proof boots, particularly if water is present in the house.
  - Rubber gloves, as well as sturdy work gloves for cleaning and removing flood-damaged items.
  - A tool, such as a shovel, to dislodge or move any debris. Avoid using your hands to recover submerged items.
  - Face masks, including a N95 respirator mask, if cleaning areas that could contain mould, asbestos or heavy dust.
  - A first aid kit (including supplies to clean and cover any cut or wound before commencing clean-up).
  - Any safety equipment typically used to handle dangerous goods or household chemicals (which may have spilled or become dislodged during flood).
- Remember: clothing (including footwear) worn for flood clean-up activities should not be worn outside of the flood clean-up location. If you are not staying in your home and must travel outside of home following clean-up activities, be sure to bring a second set of clean clothing (including footwear) to change into after you're done cleaning each day, and before traveling to another location.

**FOR DETAILED INFORMATION ON SAFELY CLEANING YOUR HOUSE AFTER FLOOD:  
CALL HEALTH LINK ALBERTA AT 1.866.408.5465 OR VISIT [WWW.ALBERTAHEALTHSERVICES.CA/FLOOD](http://WWW.ALBERTAHEALTHSERVICES.CA/FLOOD)**

All of the above steps should be followed to ensure flood-affected properties are thoroughly cleaned, and to prevent health issues.

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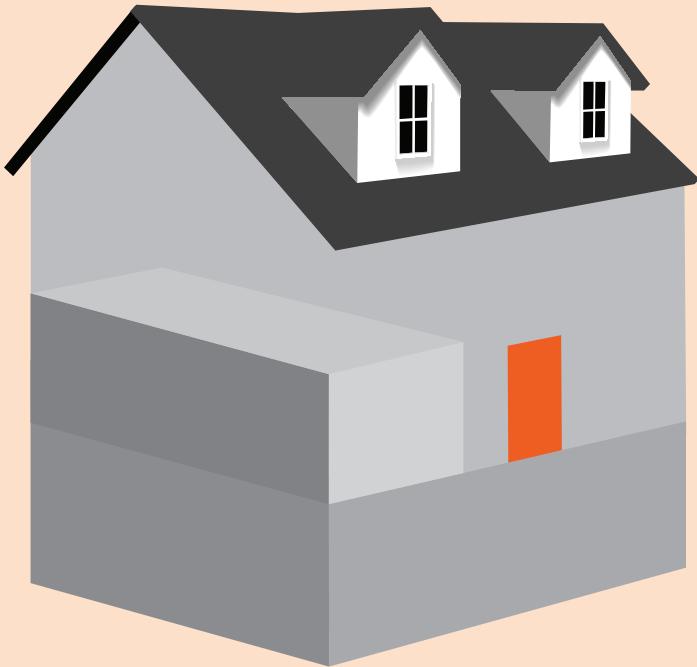
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## ARRIVING HOME

**!** If you are uncertain about the structural safety of your house, do not enter; instead, call your local municipality/authorities for guidance.

- Return home during daylight hours, when you can best see problems and hazards.
- Do not clean the house alone; bring at least one other adult with you, and keep children and pets away from all clean-up activities.
- Determine how high the waterline was before entering the house.
- If there is water above any electrical outlet in your home, leave immediately unless you have confirmed with your electricity supplier that power is off.

**!** Remember not to use any flood-damaged appliances or electrical equipment until inspected by a certified technician or electrician.



**!** Remember not to use any flood-damaged furnaces or water heaters until they have been serviced and certified safe for use by a trained repair person.

- Be prepared to start your clean-up work from the bottom of the house up; basement first.

**!** Remember: water must be removed from your flooded home slowly. You will need to drain it in stages, removing only about one third of the volume daily. If the ground is still saturated and water is removed too quickly, the walls or floors of your house could buckle.

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## BASEMENT: PRIORITY ONE

- Pump it out:** Pump out any standing water, following the guidance provided by your local municipality.
  - !** Remember: water must be removed from your flooded home slowly. You will need to drain it in stages, removing only about one third of the volume daily. If the ground is still saturated and water is removed too quickly, the walls or floors of your house could buckle.
  - !** Remember: gas-powered pumps should NOT be used indoors, as they can emit potentially deadly carbon monoxide. Electric pumps also should not be used.
- Get it out:** Remove and dispose of wet floor coverings, furniture and other soft materials as soon as possible.
  - Remove and dispose of walls that have been soaked or that have absorbed water.



- Clean it up:** Thoroughly clean interior wall cavities, using soap and water. Do NOT just clean up the affected wall surfaces.
- Sanitize:** Thoroughly sanitize all surfaces, including ceilings, using a mild bleach solution (one tablespoon of bleach to four litres of water).
  - !** Remember not to use any flood-damaged furnaces or water heaters until they have been serviced and certified safe for use by a trained repair person.

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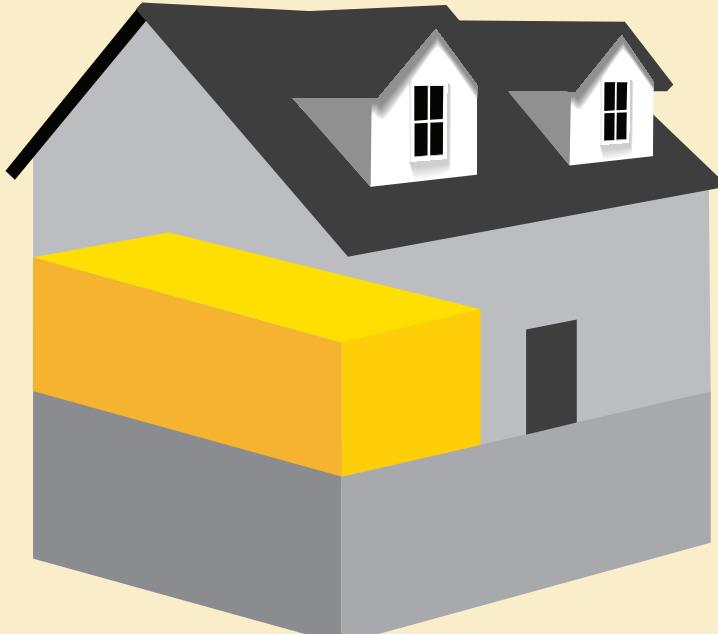
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## KITCHEN: PRIORITY TWO

- Get it out:** Throw out all foods that may have been in contact with floodwater.
  - Throw out all refrigerated or frozen foods that may have spent any time in refrigerators or freezers without power. **If in doubt, throw it out.**
- Remove and dispose of materials and surfaces that have been soaked or that have absorbed water.
- Clean it up:** Thoroughly clean all interior wall cavities, cupboards, and surfaces, using soap and water. Do NOT only clean up the affected surfaces, clean them all.



- Sanitize:** Thoroughly sanitize all surfaces, including ceilings, using a mild bleach solution (one tablespoon of bleach to four litres of water).

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## OTHER AREAS OF HOUSE: PRIORITY THREE

- Work from the bottom of the house up.**
  - !** Remember: water must be removed from your flooded home slowly. You will need to drain it in stages, removing only about one third of the volume daily. If the ground is still saturated and water is removed too quickly, the walls or floors of your house could buckle.
- Get it out:** Remove and dispose of walls, flooring, furniture and other household items that have been soaked or exposed to floodwater.
  - !** Do NOT save mattresses and box springs that are wet. They are difficult to clean, disinfect and dry before mould sets in.
- Clean it up:** To prevent growth of dangerous bacteria, thoroughly clean all surfaces of the house, as well as interior wall cavities, where surface materials were damaged and removed.
- Wash linens, bedding and clothing in hot water, ensuring contaminated items are washed separately from non-contaminated items.
- Sanitize:** Thoroughly sanitize all surfaces, including ceilings, using a mild bleach solution (one tablespoon of bleach to four litres of water).



- !** Remember to bathe or shower using soap and warm water when you finish any cleaning activities. Also be sure to wash your hands and any exposed skin regularly, using soap and warm water, during cleaning activities. Avoid touching any exposed skin with contaminated gloves or items.
- !** Remember: clothing and apparel (including footwear) worn for flood clean-up activities should not be worn outside of the flood clean-up location. If you are not staying in your home, and must travel outside of home following clean-up activities, be sure to bring a second set of clean clothing (including footwear) to change into after you're done cleaning each day, and before traveling to another location.

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# TAKING CARE OF YOURSELF AND LOVED ONES

In addition to the risks to your physical health, traumatic events like emergencies and natural disasters can have a big impact on your mental health. Coping with the stress and emotions during the disaster, and in the days and weeks that follow, can be challenging.

You aren't alone. We are here to help you take care of your mental health, as well as your physical health.

## SEEK HELP:

If you are feeling stressed or overwhelmed, there are supports and resources available to help, including:

- Mental Health Helpline  
**1-877-303-2642**
- Health Link toll-free  
**1-866-408-5465 (LINK)**

**If you are having thoughts of self-harm, please seek medical attention immediately, including calling 911.**

## DO SMALL THINGS TO TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF:

- eat nutritious food
- stay hydrated
- try to rest often and listen to your body's need for sleep
- pace yourself on your clean-up activities, and take regular breaks
- prioritize tasks, and don't pressure yourself to tackle it all at once

## LOOK OUT FOR YOURSELF, AND OTHERS, NOW AND OVER THE LONG-TERM:

The signs of stress related to a traumatic event do not always appear immediately during or after the event. Signs of trauma, and difficulty coping, may show up now, or in the weeks ahead.

Watch for these signs, and remember to seek help for yourself and your loved ones:

- feeling worried or frustrated more than usual
- feeling hopeless
- thinking about the disaster or traumatic event all the time
- having flashbacks to the event
- experiencing changes in your sleep pattern
- experiencing changes in appetite (eating more or less than usual)
- avoiding people or activities that you usually enjoy
- using alcohol or drugs more

**FOR MORE INFO ON YOUR HEALTH AFTER FLOOD:**

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# POST-FLOOD CONTACTS

**Call 911 if you have a medical emergency.**

For non-emergency health advice, and information, call Health Link at  
**1-866-408-5465** or visit [www.albertahealthservices.ca/flood](http://www.albertahealthservices.ca/flood)

AHS Mental Health  
Helpline

**1-877-303-2642**

Poison and Drug  
Information Service

**1-800-332-1414**

Canadian Red Cross  
(information and support)

**1-866-696-6484**

AHS Environmental Public Health Offices

Calgary

**403-943-2295**

Edmonton

**780-735-1800**

Red Deer

**403-356-6366**

Lethbridge

**403-388-6689**

Grande Prairie

**780-513-7517**

Alberta Disaster Recovery  
Program (information line)

**1-888-671-1111**

Highway Conditions  
and Closures Information

**511**

Insurance Bureau of Canada  
(information line)

**1-800-377-6378**

Income Support Contact Centre  
(information line)

**1-866-644-5135**

## LOCAL NUMBERS: