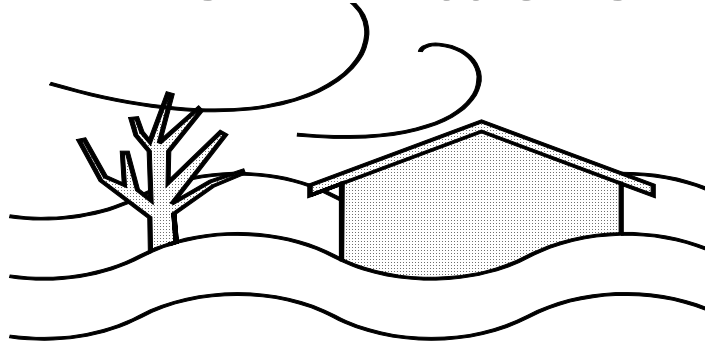


Disaster Information Series



Handling Food and Water After a Storm or Flood

General

After a major storm or flood, you must assume that all water sources are contaminated until proved safe.

Food that has been contaminated by floodwaters should also be handled carefully. Purify all water used for drinking, cooking and for washing eating and cooking utensils. Also purify the water used for washing hands, body and kitchen and bathroom surfaces.

Do not try to purify water that has a dark color, an odor or contains floating material.

Tips

To disinfect water, use one of the following methods:

- Boil at a rolling boil for 5 minutes.
- Add 1 teaspoon of liquid chlorine bleach per 5 gallons of water. Make sure the bleach contains 4 to 6 percent sodium hypochlorite as its only active ingredient.

- Add 12 drops of tincture of iodine per gallon of water.

- Add water purification tablets according to directions on the package. These tablets can be bought at most drug and sporting goods stores.

Thoroughly mix the purifying agent in the water and let stand for at least 30 minutes before using. To lessen the flat taste of boiled water, pour the water back and forth several times between two clean containers.

Always use clean or purified water to wash any parts of the body that have come in contact with surfaces contaminated by floodwaters.

Flooded foods that should be discarded:

- Meat, poultry, fish and eggs
- Fresh produce
- Preserves sealed with paraffin
- Unopened jars with waxed cardboard seals, such as mayonnaise and salad dressing

- ☉ All foods in cardboard boxes, paper, foil, cellophane or cloth
- ☉ Spices, seasonings and extracts
- ☉ Home-canned foods
- ☉ Opened containers and packages
- ☉ Flour, sugar, grain, coffee and other staples in canisters
- ☉ Cans dented, leaking, bulging or rusted
- ☉ Wooden spoons, plastic utensils, baby bottle nipples and pacifiers

“Flooded” foods safe to use:

Undamaged canned goods and commercial glass jars of food are safe if you sanitize the containers. Mark contents on can or jar lid with indelible ink. Remove labels. Wash jars and cans in a strong detergent solution with a scrub brush. Immerse these containers for 15 minutes in a solution of 2 teaspoons of chlorine bleach per quart of room temperature water. Air dry before opening. Sanitize dishes and glassware the same way.

For additional post-storm and flood safety tips, contact a home economist at your parish office of the Louisiana Cooperative Extension Service, the education and information division of the LSU Agricultural Center. It is listed under local government in the telephone directory.

Disaster Safety Facts

1. More injuries occur in the recovery process than during the disaster.
2. Electrical safety is important after a disaster.
3. Slippery surfaces cause falls and injuries.
4. Be sure the water is safe before you drink it.
5. Snakes and vermin are often prevalent after floods and hurricanes.
6. Gas leaks can cause explosions after disasters.
7. Stress levels are often high after disasters. Learn how to deal with stress.
8. Consider all foods that have been in contact with flood water as contaminated.

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Authors: Sara Seals, PhD., Associate Specialist, Nutrition and Health
Beth Reames, PhD., Specialist, Nutrition and Health

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Louisiana State University Agricultural Center, H. Rouse Caffey, Chancellor
Louisiana Cooperative Extension Service, Jack L. Bagent, Vice Chancellor and Director

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