

## HAMILTON COUNTY

GENERAL HEALTH DISTRICT  
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## Know the facts!

### CLEANING UP AFTER FLOOD AND SEWER BACKUPS

Bacteria, fecal material, viruses, and other organisms associated with sewer water backups can cause disease. Use the following information to protect your health and prevent disease.

#### How do sewer backups occur?

- Flooding of sanitary sewers during heavy rain.
- Blockage in private sewer line (home, apartment).
- Blockage in public sanitary sewer line.
- Plumbing problems, such as gutters/down spouts or sump pumps connected to sanitary sewers.

#### How do I clean up after floods and sewer backups?

- Odors from sewage backups are unpleasant but not harmful. Removal and cleanup of sewer water are essential.
- Wash contaminated surfaces/objects with warm, soapy water and disinfect with a bleach/water solution, one cap of 5.25 percent chlorine bleach per one gallon water.
- Discard or properly wash and disinfect toys, clothing, and other contaminated objects.
- Wear rubber boots and gloves during removal/cleanup.

#### How do I prevent disease during floods and sewer backups?

- Avoid skin contact with sewer water, especially cuts and sores. Keep them clean and covered.
- Do not allow children to play in areas contaminated by sewage backup.
- Do not eat/drink anything exposed to sewer water.
- Keep contaminated objects, water, and hands away from mucous membranes (mouth, eyes, and nose).
- Wash hands frequently, especially after bathroom use, before eating, and immediately following contact with sewer water or contaminated objects/surfaces.

#### When disinfecting contaminated objects:

- Read and follow label instructions on bleach.
- Never mix cleaning products.
- Do not use ammonia.

*For questions or more information, contact the Hamilton County General Health District at (513) 946-7832.*

### **Additional Cleanup Recommendations & Precautions**

The following guidelines may help prevent the transmission of disease and reduce property loss.

#### **Power**

Turn off main power switches. Air out and wipe dry all appliances and electrical outlets exposed to water before use. If you have fuel oil or gas systems, be sure tanks are secure and all lines are free from breaks.

#### **Carpets & Rugs**

You can save carpet replacement costs by keeping carpets in place and cleaning with a mild detergent; carpets cleaned after removal nearly always shrink beyond recovery. Carpets and rugs with severe exposure to water *must* be removed to thoroughly clean. Remove silt accumulated on carpet liner. Generally, the carpet liner must be discarded because it cannot be cleaned adequately. If you prefer, call a reputable carpet cleaner.

#### **Floors, Drapes, & Furniture**

Scrub and wash all objects in your home, including clothes, exposed to flood waters. If available, use the city water supply; it is chlorinated adequately to provide mild disinfection. Use cold tap water with soap – boiling the water will eliminate the chlorine content. Floors and other flood contacted surfaces should be disinfected with a chlorine solution made from household bleach. Prepare the solution by adding one heaping tablespoon of bleach (5.25%) to every four gallons of water. Take good curtains and draperies to a reputable dry cleaner.

#### **Basement**

Pump out standing water and remove all debris. Wait to pump until flood waters have receded below basement level. Allow debris to drain before disposal. Strain away all liquids from trash. After straining trash, wrap in newspaper and store in tight-lid garbage cans until pick up.

#### **General**

Open all windows for drying and ventilation. Use electric fans.

#### **Food & Water Safety**

Discard food exposed to flood waters. If refrigerators and/or freezers have taken in flood waters, discard food stored there. If no flood water entered these appliances but power was lost long enough for foods to thaw, discard all partially thawed foods unless prepared immediately. Discard milk, cheeses and other foods prone to spoilage. Completely thawed meats and vegetables should be discarded without question. Clean undented cans cleaned with bleach solution. Discard all bulging or leaking canned food. Keep flood waters away from mouth, nose, eyes and skin if possible. Flood waters can carry microorganisms and other contaminants. Keep children from playing in water.

*For more information please call the Health District at 946-7832 or 946-7862.*