

# emergency REDiPlan

## Cleaning your home after a flood

It is important to thoroughly wash and disinfect every part of your home that has been flooded because of potential contamination from floodwaters.

Make sure you have good protective equipment: strong boots, long pants and sleeves, eye protection and gloves.

Tasks such as washing clothes may have to wait until all electricity, gas and water are restored, or done at family or friends' homes (see *Cleaning clothes and valuables* fact sheet for further information).

**Warning:** If the house is badly damaged and looks unsafe, stay out until a building inspector or engineer has checked it. Take care at all times, as damage can be hidden.

### Clean-up supplies

Put together a clean-up kit, containing useful items such as a broom, mop, bucket, and cleaning supplies. In most cases, household cleaning products will do the job; always check the label to see which materials they can be used upon and their directions for use.

Product	Recommended	Also suitable
Cleaners	Household all-purpose cleaner	Laundry soap or detergent
Disinfectants	Commercial disinfectants or sanitisers	¼ cup of laundry bleach*, with 4 litres of water
Mildew removers	Commercial mildew removers	Washing soda, tri-sodium phosphate or ¼ cup of laundry bleach* with 4 litres of water

*\*Liquid chlorine bleach can do a variety of flood clean-up jobs. Check the label to ensure 5.25% sodium hypochlorite is the only active ingredient. Bleach that has a scent added to improve its smell is available. Don't use dry bleach or any bleach that does not contain chlorine.*

**Warning:** Be careful of fumes and wear rubber gloves. Read the safety instructions on the label. Do not mix bleach with other household chemical products, especially ammonia or toilet bowl cleaner; the chemical reaction can create a poisonous gas. Do not use bleach on aluminium or linoleum.

### Cleaning tips

Tackle one room at a time. Make sure you are working in a well ventilated area.

Apply cleaner and give it time to work before you mop or sponge it up. Follow directions and all safety precautions on the container. If you have any doubts, seek advice. Many products have consumer advisory hotlines on their labels.

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A two bucket approach is most efficient:

- use one bucket for rinse water and the other for the cleaner. Using two buckets keeps most of the dirty rinse water out of your cleaning solution
- rinse out your sponge, mop, or cleaning cloth in the rinse bucket
- wring it as dry as possible and keep it rolled up tight as you put it in the cleaner bucket
- let it unroll to absorb the cleaner
- replace the rinse water frequently (make sure the water you use is free from contamination).

After cleaning a room or an item, go over it again with a disinfectant to kill the germs and smell left by the floodwaters.

You may need to repeat this after 24 to 48 hours to kill mould and fungi not destroyed on the first application. You may also need to get rid of mildew, an unwelcome companion to moisture that shows as fuzzy splotches.

## Walls

Start cleaning a wall at the bottom or where the worst damage occurred. If you did not have to remove the wallboard or plaster, you may find it won't come clean and you will want to replace it. If you have removed the wallboard or plaster, wash the studs and sills and disinfect them.

## Windows

If you taped your windows before the storm, clean the tape off as soon as possible; the sun will bake the adhesive into the glass. If glass cleaners don't remove the adhesive, other alternatives are tar remover, acetone, nail polish remover, or a razor blade.

**Recovery is a long and sometimes tiring process – make sure you look after yourself. See our booklet *Coping with a major personal crisis* or visit [www.redcross.org.au](http://www.redcross.org.au) for further information.**

Australian Red Cross acknowledges the contribution of American Red Cross in the production of this information sheet.

The Red Cross Emergency REDiPlan project provides people with general information to help them deal with the effects of an emergency.

This information sheet is designed to assist people deal with the effects of floods but necessarily contains only information of a general nature that may not be appropriate in all situations.

Before taking any action you should independently consider whether that action is appropriate in the light of your own circumstances.

Depending upon the particular circumstances of your situation, or if you do not feel confident about undertaking any suggested task, you should seek the advice of professional services.

**In any event, before undertaking any suggested task you should always contact your insurer.**

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