

Cleaning and Disinfecting After a Flood

Follow these simple rules for cleaning and disinfecting items after flooding:

1. Items that are broken, have been torn, splintered, cracked, dented, etc. should be thrown away immediately and replaced.
2. To clean small items soaked by flood waters that **will** absorb water such as bedding, clothing, stuffed animals, etc.
 - Before you wash item in the washing machine, first soak them in cold water. This will help remove mud and filth.
 - DO NOT pre-soak in your washer as it may cause damage to the machine. Curtains, blankets, accent rugs, and other large items can be hung on a line and sprayed with water from a hose to remove mud and filth.
 - Use hot water and detergent when washing items in the washing machine. Be careful not to overload the washing machine.
 - Add 1 cup of liquid chlorine bleach to wash water before adding clothes or other items, use ½ cup bleach for front loading washers.
 - Tumble dry in a dryer or hang items to dry in the sun.
3. Large items that will absorb water, **like** patio upholstered furniture, mattresses, wall to wall carpeting, etc., that have been soaked by flood waters **MUST** be thrown away.
4. Items that are **solid**, or **will not** absorb water, such as concrete, tile or vinyl flooring, plastic patio furniture, plastic toys, picture frames, etc. can be cleaned with a mild household detergent solution (examples?).
5. **Prepare a bleach solution following the manufacturer's label instructions for disinfecting.** To disinfect **solid** items (after cleaning), make a mild bleach and water solution, use the solution in one of these ways:
 - Put small objects into the bleach/water solution for one minute. Remove from the solution and allow to air dry.
 - Spray the bleach/water solution on the item until thoroughly wet and allow to air dry.
 - Use a cloth dipped in the bleach/water solution to completely wipe the item down and allow to air dry.

If in DOUBT, throw it OUT!

Resources:

CDC: [Guidelines for Cleaning Safely After a Disaster – Floodwater and mold](#)

EPA: [Flooded Homes Cleanup Guidance](#)

EPA: [Flooded Homes - Things to Keep and Throw Away](#)