



Prevent • Promote • Protect

Office of Communication

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Keep Food and Water Safe After a Disaster or Emergency

After Flooding

Throw away food that may have come in contact with flood or storm water, perishable foods, and those with an unusual odor, color, or texture. When in doubt, throw it out. Do not use water you suspect or have been told is contaminated to wash dishes, brush your teeth, wash and prepare food, wash your hands, make ice, or make baby formula.

Food: Identify and throw away food that may not be safe to eat.

- Throw away food that may have come in contact with flood or storm water.
- Throw away food that has an unusual odor, color, or texture. When in doubt, throw it out.
- Throw away perishable foods (including meat, poultry, fish, eggs and leftovers) in your refrigerator when the power has been off for 4 hours or more.
- Thawed food that contains ice crystals can be refrozen or cooked. Freezers, if left unopened and full, will keep food safe for 48 hours (24 hours if half full).
- Throw away canned foods that are bulging, opened, or damaged.
- Food containers with screw-caps, snap-lids, crimped caps (soda pop bottles), twist caps, flip tops, snap-open, and home canned foods should be discarded if they have come into contact with floodwater because they cannot be disinfected.
- If cans have come in contact with floodwater or storm water, remove the labels, wash the cans, and dip them in a solution of 1 cup (8 oz/250 mL) of non-scented bleach in 5 gallons of water. Re-label the cans with a marker. Include the expiration date.
- Do not use contaminated water to wash dishes, brush your teeth, wash and prepare food, wash your hands, make ice, or make baby formula.

Store food safely

While the power is out, keep the refrigerator and freezer doors closed as much as possible.

Feeding infants and young children

- Breastfed infants should continue breastfeeding. For formula-fed infants, use ready-to-feed formula if possible. If using ready-to-feed formula is not possible, it is best to use bottled water to prepare formula. If bottled water is not available, use boiled water. Use treated water to prepare formula only if you do not have bottled or boiled water.
- If you prepare formula with boiled water (boiled vigorously for 8 minutes), let the formula cool sufficiently.
- Clean feeding bottles and nipples with bottled, boiled, or treated water before each use.
- Wash your hands before preparing formula and before feeding an infant. Use alcohol-based hand sanitizer for washing your hands if the water supply is limited.

Clean and sanitize food-contact surfaces.

CDC recommends discarding wooden cutting boards, baby bottle nipples, and pacifiers that have come into contact with flood waters. Clean and sanitize surfaces, following these four steps:

1. Wash with soap and warm, clean water.
2. Rinse with clean water.
3. Sanitize by immersing for 1 minute in a solution of 1 teaspoon of chlorine bleach (5.25%, non-scented) per gallon of clean water.
4. Allow to air dry.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention