

Cleaning and Disinfecting Your Home After the Flood

Cleaning

The four major steps to cleaning many items after the flood are:

1. **Remove contaminated mud.** Shovel out as much mud as possible, then use a garden sprayer or hose to wash away mud from hard surfaces. Start cleaning walls at the bottom or where damage is worst. Remember to hose out heating ducts, disconnecting the furnace first.
2. **Clean.** Scrub surfaces with hot water and a heavy-duty cleaner. Scrub off all contaminants with a brush. Rinse off soap.
3. **Disinfect.** Bacteria can only be destroyed by disinfecting or sanitizing. This can be done by wiping or spraying surfaces with a solution of $\frac{1}{4}$ cup chlorine bleach per gallon of water or a product that is labeled with an EPA registration number as a disinfectant. After wiping or spraying with a disinfectant, put the item out in the sun, if possible, for additional natural disinfecting plus drying.
(See cleaners and disinfectants chart on back page.)
4. **Dry.** Ventilate with an entrance and exhaust opening for air to promote cross-ventilation. Place a fan in a window or door with the fan to the outdoors. Seal the rest of the opening with cardboard, plywood or blankets so the fan can

create a vacuum. Wood should have a moisture content of less than 15 percent before drywall, paneling or other coverings are placed over it.

Mildew

If mildew has developed because the molds weren't killed and the source is still damp, a strong product is required to remove it, and the required strength may ruin some household items.

Hard Surfaces

Mildew may be removed from walls and similar hard surfaces with this solution:

1 gallon water
$\frac{3}{4}$ cup liquid chlorine bleach
1 cup trisodium phosphate (available in hardware and discount stores as TSP)

Follow all safety precautions when using this strong solution. Wash a small area at a time. Rinse quickly, and dry with a soft cloth.

Clothing

To remove mildew from clothing or textiles that are colorfast

Soak in a solution of 2 tablespoons liquid chlorine bleach and 1 quart water 5-15 minutes, then rinse.

To remove mildew from non-bleachable items

Mix 1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice and 1 tablespoon salt. Moisten the stain. If possible, spread in the sun to bleach. Rinse thoroughly. Another option is to soak the stain in 3% hydrogen peroxide for 15 minutes.



Cleaners and Disinfectants

Type of Cleaner	Uses	Precautions	Additional Suggestions
Liquid household cleaner (Top Job, Ajax, Janitor in a Drum, Lysol, Mr. Clean)	Wash hard surfaces such as painted walls, floors, woodwork, porcelain.	Dilute with water as directed on container for specific uses.	
Powdered household cleaner (Spic'n Span, Ajax)	Removes mud, silt, greasy deposits.	Dissolve in water to make a solution.	
All-purpose laundry soaps	General household cleaning. Hand-washing and laundry. Moderately and heavily soiled and washable colorfast textiles.	Do not use on wool, silk or fabric blends containing these fibers.	Rinse well to remove suds.
All-purpose laundry detergents (Tide, Wisk, Oxydol, Cheer)	Moderately or heavily soiled washable, colorfast textiles. Outside of appliances. Painted walls and woodwork. Floors.	Do not use on wool, silk or fabric containing these fiberblends.	Rinse well to remove suds.
Light-duty dishwashing soaps (Ivory Snow, Dreft) or detergents (Lux, Joy)	Lightly soiled washable fabrics and household textiles. Rugs and carpets. Appliances and furniture. Washable wall paper.	Rinse well to remove suds.	Safe for wool and silk fibers and fabrics blends containing these fibers. Safe for most dyes.
Household ammonia	Hard surfaces: windows, walls, woodwork, floors, tile, porcelain.	Dilute in water. Do not get in eyes. May irritate skin.	
Trisodium phosphate (TSP 90)	Walls, woodwork, floors.	Powder. Dilute in water. Do not get in eyes. May irritate skin.	6 tablespoons per gallon of water.
Quaternary ammonium disinfectants	Laundry-safe for all fibers.	May cause some color change.	Add at beginning of rinse cycle.
Pine oil disinfectants (Pine-Sol)	Laundry-safe for washable clothing.	Do not use on wool or silk. Pine odor will linger on these fabrics.	Add before putting clothes in washer or dilute in 1 quart water.
Liquid chlorine bleach disinfectants (Clorox, Purex, Hilex)	Laundry.	Do not use on wool, silk or water-repellent fabrics.	Add bleach before putting clothes in washer or dilute in 1 quart water.
Phenolic disinfectants (Lestoil, Lysol)	Laundry-safe for washables.	Do not use on wool or silk.	Add in wash or rinse cycle.

Adapted from Minnesota Division of Emergency Services and Minnesota Extension Service