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# Indiana State Department of Health

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## Flood & Disaster Frequently Asked Questions

### I have well water. How do I know if it is contaminated?

- The Indiana State Department of Health (ISDH) is offering free well water testing. Contact your local health department (contact list available at [www.statehealth.IN.gov](http://www.statehealth.IN.gov)) to receive a free, self-addressed sampling kit to submit to the ISDH lab for free testing. Results can be expected a few days after submission. **Well water samples must be submitted to the lab within 30 hours of being collected for valid results.** In order to ensure deliver time within the **30 hours** required for testing, individuals may wish to use a private courier system, such as United Parcel Service (UPS) or Federal Express. Water sampling kits can be dropped off at the lab in person, at 550 W. 16<sup>th</sup> Street in downtown Indianapolis from 8:15 a.m. to 4:45 p.m. (local time), Monday thru Friday. Individuals can also have a local private lab test their well water samples. The lab will analyze the sample and return the results to the collector, usually within 72 hours. The cost for this service will likely be between \$25 and \$30. A list of Indiana State Department of Health-certified microbiology drinking water laboratories can be obtained on the Indiana State Department of Health Web site at: [www.in.gov/isdh/22450.htm](http://www.in.gov/isdh/22450.htm).

### How do I avoid mold in my home?

- The most effective way to eliminate mold growth is to remove it from materials that can be cleaned and to discard materials that cannot be cleaned or are physically damaged beyond use. Persons with respiratory conditions, allergies, asthma, or weakened immune systems should avoid mold cleanup if possible, or seek the advice of their doctor and determine what type of personal protective equipment is appropriate. For more information, visit: <http://emergency.cdc.gov/disasters/mold/>.

### What food can I still use after a flood?

- As a result of flooded conditions in homes, large quantities of foodstuffs may be submerged in flood water or sewerage backflow. **As a general rule, food should not be salvaged unless it is in a container that protects it and is one which can be thoroughly cleaned with soap and water and sterilized with boiling water or chlorine.** Since paper, cardboard, wood, and most plastic food containers are not waterproof, foods in such containers which have been under floodwater should be destroyed. For more information, visit: [www.in.gov/isdh/23580.htm](http://www.in.gov/isdh/23580.htm).

### Do I need to worry about mosquitoes?

- Once the flood waters recede, remaining standing water is ideal breeding grounds for mosquitoes that carry the West Nile virus. State health officials recommend applying insect repellent containing DEET, Picardin, or oil of lemon eucalyptus to clothes and exposed skin to protect themselves from being bitten by a mosquito.

People should also take steps to remove standing water on their property, including disposing old tires, tin cans, plastic containers, ceramic pots or other unused containers that can hold water. For more information, visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Web site at: <http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvbid/westnile/index.htm>.

### Can floodwater make me sick?

- Yes, floodwater can be contaminated with a variety of contaminants, including sewage. Children should **never** play in floodwaters. People must not drink floodwater, which could be contaminated with raw sewage, and should avoid getting floodwater in eyes, nose, and mouth. Individuals exposed to floodwaters should wash their hands thoroughly with warm, soapy water. For more information on diseases caused by sewage-contaminated water, visit: [www.in.gov/isdh/files/diseases.pdf](http://www.in.gov/isdh/files/diseases.pdf)

People in flooded areas should thoroughly wash any cuts, scrapes, scratches, or other skin injuries with soap and water and apply an antiseptic and bandages to make sure they do not become infected. Injuries exposed to floodwater and debris should be closely watched for signs of infection like redness, swelling, pain, and drainage. See your health care provider right away if those symptoms develop.

### **What do I need to know about safely cleaning up my home after a flood?**

- People cleaning up their homes after flooding should wear gloves, if possible, to avoid being exposed to contaminants in the floodwater and to prevent injury. State health officials advise anyone who sustains an injury from materials affected by floodwaters seek immediate medical attention. Following are some basic cleaning tips. For more information, visit [www.in.gov/isdh/23581.htm](http://www.in.gov/isdh/23581.htm):
  - Turn off the electricity.
  - Clean and dry wet light fixtures before turning the electricity back on.
  - For household cleaning after floodwater contamination, disinfect all surfaces. A bleach solution of ¼-cup chlorine bleach to one gallon of water works well.
  - Items that cannot be salvaged after a flood and must be thrown away include wet ceiling tiles, paper products, baseboards, gypsum board (also known as dry wall), and insulation.
  - Carpets may be saved by wet vacuuming, shampooing, and making certain the carpet is completely dry.
  - Mattresses or other large items soaked with floodwater will probably have to be discarded. Some mattresses can be salvaged after disinfecting and air-drying.
  - Wipe wood and metal studs with a bleach solution and allow to air dry.
  - If possible, open windows and doors during the clean-up process and leave them open for at least 24 hours.

### **What is my risk for tetanus?**

- State health officials recommend people in flooded areas make sure they are up-to-date on their tetanus immunizations. Any type of wound, major or minor, could be an entry source for the tetanus organism, which can be found in floodwater. Routine tetanus boosters are recommended every 10 years. For people who receive more serious wounds, a tetanus booster is appropriate if they have not received one within the last 5 years. Tetanus vaccines are available from your primary health care provider or your local health department. A complete listing of local health departments is available on the State Department of Health Web site at: [www.statehealth.in.gov](http://www.statehealth.in.gov) by clicking on “Indiana Local Health Departments.” For more information on tetanus, visit [www.in.gov/isdh/22437.htm](http://www.in.gov/isdh/22437.htm).

### **What do I do if my birth/death certificate is lost or destroyed?**

- Individuals in counties declared as emergencies by Gov. Daniels who have birth/death certificates that were lost or destroyed due to flood or tornado damage can apply for new birth/death certificates at their local health department (contact information available at: [www.statehealth.IN.gov](http://www.statehealth.IN.gov) or by calling 1-888-880-3749), or from the Indiana State Department of Health. To apply for a birth/death certificate from the State Department of Health online, go to: [www.vitalrecords.in.gov](http://www.vitalrecords.in.gov). To apply by mail, download a copy of form 49607/49606 at: <http://www.in.gov/isdh/20444.htm>. The State Department of Health is waiving fees for people needing to replace birth/death certificates lost or destroyed due to the recent flooding or tornado activity in declared disaster areas.

### **Where can I get clean-up supplies for cleaning my home?**

- The Salvation Army or American Red Cross may have kits available. If not, the Salvation Army is providing residents with Wal-Mart cards when residents sign up for FEMA assistance.

### **Are there first aid or personal hygiene kits available for individuals?**

- The Salvation Army is providing personal hygiene kits that include a few days supply for your use.