

What to Do About a Flooded Basement

- Call a plumber. Some will give you an estimate of what it will cost to pump your basement. A plumber also can install a sump pump in your basement. That will keep water flowing out of the house and could prevent a flood from damaging your possessions.
- Dry it yourself. Buy an all-purpose vacuum to suck up small amounts of water. You also may buy a utility or sump pump with a hose attachment to move the water from your house into your front or back yard. These can be found at most hardware stores.
- Caution children not to swim or play in flooded areas. Remind them to keep hands clean and away from their mouths, especially if they've been around potentially contaminated floodwater.
- Flooded basements should be drained and cleansed as soon as conditions permit. Start at the bottom and work up, ceilings last. Homeowners with swimming pools must remember to drain and clean the pool or treat the pool water.
- Do not touch dangling wires. Report damage to the police or utility company. Never touch any electrical equipment that is wet without standing on a piece of dry wood and wearing rubber-soled shoes or boots and rubber gloves.
- Well water to be used for drinking or cooking should be boiled for 15 minutes, or a few drops of liquid bleach should be added to each gallon of water, which then must stand for 5 minutes before drinking. Floods may contaminate the water supply. To improve the taste, pour the treated water into another clean container or add a pinch of salt.
- Thawed and water-damaged frozen foods or fresh and packaged foods and beverages exposed to floods could be contaminated and should be discarded. Even foods and drinks in hermetically sealed cans must first be disinfected with a bleach-chlorine solution or immersed in boiling water for 1 minute before use.
- Bandages, sanitary pads, paper goods, drugs and cosmetics immersed in contaminated water should be destroyed.
- Dishes, toys and all items and surfaces that have been in contact with floods should be sanitized with a bleach solution: Mix one-fourth of a cup of bleach with a gallon of warm water.