



Iowa Department of Public Health  
Bureau of Environmental Health Services

## Cleaning and Disinfecting After a Flood

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

1. Make sure the item is in **good repair**. Items that have been torn, splintered, cracked, broken, dented, etc. should be discarded and replaced.
2. To clean small items soaked by flood waters that are **porous** (will absorb water) such as bedding, clothing, stuffed animals, etc.
  - Pre-soak items in cold water before machine washing to remove mud and filth. DO NOT pre-soak in your washer as it may cause damage. Curtains, blankets, accent rugs and other large items can be hung on a line and hosed down to remove mud and filth.
  - Use hot water and detergent when washing items. 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 are **porous** such as patio upholstered furniture, mattresses wall to wall carpeting, etc., that have been soaked by flood waters **MUST** be discarded.
4. To clean items that are **solid** (will not absorb water) such as a concrete, tile or vinyl flooring, plastic patio furniture, plastic toys, picture frames, etc. use a mild household detergent solution to clean the item.
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:
  - Immerse small objects in the bleach/water solution for one minute. Remove from the solution and allow to air dry.
  - Spritz/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!**