

Cleaning Your Yard after a Flood

Flood waters may contaminate yards, gardens, outdoor play equipment, sand boxes and other loose surface materials, with harmful microorganisms, chemicals and debris. These contaminants may remain after the flood waters recede. Contaminated yards should be cleaned to ensure the area is safe for children to play.

LAWNS AND SOIL

Harmful microorganisms may remain on lawns or in soil for just a few hours or for a longer time. Sunlight and wind drying will help to remove the harmful microorganisms over time. You may choose not to remove or repair the lawn or soil.

If you choose to remediate the lawn or soil, you may:

- re-sod or reseed grassy areas.
- add new soil onto contaminated soil.
- cover areas with solid paving material, like stone, asphalt or brick.

Always remove any flood debris like broken glass, branches, and garbage before allowing children to play in the yard.

Ensure your children wash their hands well after playing outside and discourage them from placing toys or their hands in their mouths.

GARDENS

Flood waters can contaminate garden vegetables and berries with harmful microorganisms that are not safe to eat.

- Discard or compost any ready-to-harvest vegetables.
- Discard or compost any vegetables or berries that grow above ground, including fruit or vegetables like berries, peas, beans and lettuces.
- Discard any vegetables that grow below ground that do not have a thick peel, like radishes, onions and green onions.
- Keep any root vegetables, like potatoes and turnips, as long as you:
 - harvest 4 to 6 weeks after the flood waters recede.
 - wash well with cool running water and a scrub brush.
 - peel and cook before eating.
- Be cautious about eating any flooded fruits and vegetables. If you aren't sure if they are safe, **throw them away**.

You do not need to replace your garden soil. Work the soil with a rotary tiller or similar equipment regularly to expose underlying soil to sunlight, and then replant your crops.

OUTDOOR PLAY EQUIPMENT

Outdoor play equipment must be cleaned and sanitized before children use it.

1. Ensure flood waters are gone from the play area.
2. Block access to play area, if necessary.
3. Clear away any debris in the play area.
4. Inspect the playground for any damaged equipment. Damaged play equipment needs to be repaired or replaced before use by children.
5. Clean away mud and sewage from playground equipment.
6. Sanitize playground equipment using a mild bleach solution (1 tablespoon bleach to 4 litres water).

SAND BOXES AND OTHER LOOSE MATERIALS

- Wood chips and similar loose material should be removed and replaced.
- Remove and replace any sand and gravel that is contaminated with silt and small debris, if located beneath playground equipment.

Sandboxes

There are several ways to remove harmful microorganisms from sandboxes. Choose one of the following methods.

- Remove and replace the sand.
- Turn sand over frequently with a shovel to allow sunlight and wind-drying to remove harmful microorganisms.
- Disinfect sand by applying a stronger bleach solution (1/3 cup bleach to 4 litres of water) to wet the sand. Water the sand with clear water to allow the bleach solution to penetrate the sand. Turn the top layer of sand, about 7.5 inches (17 centimetres) deep.

For more information, please contact your nearest Environmental Public Health office.

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