

FLOOD: Frequently Asked Questions

Q What is flood and how it is classified?

A Floods are defined as the overflow of areas that are not normally submerged with water or a stream that has broken its normal confines or has accumulated due to lack of drainage.

Floods can be classified in terms of precipitating event.

- Flash flood
- Coastal flood associated with storm, cyclone and tsunami
- River floods, a seasonal phenomena of South Asia occurring in concordance with the monsoon July to October.

Q. Can Flood be forecasted?

A. Yes, with scientific development, flood forecasting is made much in advance.

Q. What are the Public Health Risks related to flood?

A. The health problems relating to flood can be either due to direct impact on human population, direct impact on existing infrastructure or the resultant effects due to combination of these factors.

Q. What is the direct impact of flood?

A. The direct impact of flood is drowning.

Q. What are the common ailments/diseases found after flood?

A. Please see the table below:

Types of ailments	Due to
1) Respiratory diseases	Adverse condition of living
2) Injuries (not very common)	Collapse of houses/standing structure
3) Water-borne diseases (Diarrhoeal diseases/Cholera, gastroenteritis, Dysentery etc.) Infective Hepatitis, Poliomyelitis.	Non-availability or inadequate availability of drinking water due to: a) Flooding of wells, which cause pollution to the water b) Breakdown of piped water supply c) Inaccessibility of available water sources because of damages caused by flood. d) Unsanitary conditions in villages / evacuation camps due to: a. Accumulation water b. Lack of excreta disposal c. Blockage / disruption of normal drain d. Slush with increase in

breeding space for flies

- e. Overcrowding at temporary shelters.
- f. Dumping of compound dry refuse
- g. Dumping of animal excreta
- h. Dumping of carcasses

4) Malaria / Filaria

Increase in mosquito breeding space

5) Skin diseases / Eye Diseases / Respiratory Diseases

Lack of personal hygiene and overcrowding

6) Snake / Insects bite

Water entering into their shelters

Q. What preventive measures should be undertaken following flood?

A. Water-borne diseases are one of the most common phenomena during flood. Diarrhoeal diseases are one of earlier manifestations but diseases like typhoid, infective hepatitis and poliomyelitis are usually seen after about a fortnight. Therefore consumption of safe drinking water, maintenance of good personal hygiene and sanitary arrangement is the key measures.

Q. What exactly is safe water for drinking and cooking?

A. Safe drinking water includes bottled, boiled, or treated water. Here are some general rules concerning water for drinking and cooking:

Remember:

- Do not use contaminated water to wash dishes, brush your teeth, wash and prepare food, or make ice.
- If you use bottled water, know where it has come from. Otherwise, water should be boiled or treated before use. Drink only bottled, boiled, or treated water until your supply is tested and found safe.
- Boiling water kills harmful bacteria and parasites. Boil water for 1 minute at 100 degree centigrade will kill most organisms.
- Water may be treated with chlorine or iodine tablets, or by mixing six drops (1/8 teaspoon) of unscented, ordinary household chlorine bleach (5.25 percent sodium hypochlorite) per gallon of water. Mix the solution thoroughly, and let stand for about thirty minutes. However, this treatment will not kill parasitic organisms.

Q How to use Chlorine tablets to make water safe for drinking

A After adding proper dose of chlorine tablet stir the water and leave for half an hour before use.

Use of chlorine tablets: Nascent chlorine makes water safe for drinking

Wight of tablet	Strength of Chlorine	Quantity of water for disinfection
2.5 gm	300 mg	225 litres
0.5 gm	25 mg	20 litres
0.125 gm	1.25 mg	1 liters

Q. What are specific public health related activities after flood?

A. Following are the activities that should be undertaken after flood:

- Water quality assurance
- Disposal of waste water and excreta
- Mosquito control and fly proofing
- Health education

Q. What precautions one should take about food in flood situations?

A. **FOOD SAFETY**

Do not eat any food that may have come into contact with flood water. Discard any food without a waterproof container if there is any chance that it has come into contact with flood water. Undamaged, commercially canned foods can be saved if you remove the can labels, thoroughly wash the cans, and re-label it.

Q. What are the basic health and hygiene messages in flood situations?

A. Health and Hygiene messages:

One result of the flood may be a lapse in basic hygiene during the emergency period. It is critical for us remember to practice basic hygiene. We must wash our hands with soap and water that has been boiled or disinfected:

- Before preparing or eating food
- After toilet use
- After participating in flood cleanup activities and
- After handling articles contaminated with flood water or sewage.

Flood waters may contain fecal material from overflowing sewage systems, and agricultural and industrial byproducts. Although skin contact with flood water does not, by itself, pose a serious health risk, there is some risk of disease from eating or drinking anything contaminated with flood water. If you have any open cuts or sores that will be exposed to flood water, keep them as clean as possible by washing well with soap to control infection. If a wound develops redness, swelling, or drainage, seek immediate medical attention.

Do's and Don'ts after flood:

- There is a possibility of spread of water borne diseases after flood, and hence take preventive measures regarding safe drinking water and personal hygiene. Medical treatment should be taken immediately in case of any illness.
- Do not enter deep, unknown waters.
- Do not go near the riverbank even after the floodwater has receded.
- Sprinkle crude burnt oil in the stagnant dirty water. Inspect your house for any cracks or other damage.
- Check all the walls, floor, ceiling, doors and windows, so that any chance of house falling down can be known and you can be aware about the immediate danger.
- If the floodwater has entered the house or has surrounded the house, then it is advisable not to enter such house.
- Keep listening to weather forecast on radio.
- Move to your residence only when instructed by the competent authority. It is not safe to believe that the problems have ended after the flood water has receded.
- Inform the competent authority/officer for restoration of the necessary connections like gas, electricity, telephone, drainage, etc.
- Beware of the various insects or poisonous snakes that may have been dragged inside the house along with the floodwater.
- Destroy the food commodities that have been affected by floodwater.
- Check properly all the electric circuits, floor level furnace, boilers, gas cylinders, or electric equipments like motor pump etc. Check whether any inflammable or explosive item has not entered along with the floodwater.
- Switch off the main electric supply, if any damage is noticed to the electric equipments.
- If you find any breakage in the drainage system stop using latrines and do not use tap water.
- Do not use polluted water.
- Sewerage system should be checked and any damage should be repaired immediately so as to curtail spread of diseases.
- Empty the water clogged in the basement slowly with help of water pump so that damage to infrastructure can be minimized.
- Check gas leakage which can be known by smell of gas or by hearing the sound of leakage; immediately open all windows and leave the house.
- Boil drinking water before usage and drink chlorinated water.
- Eat safe food.
- Rescue work should be undertaken immediately after flood situation as per the instruction. Do not follow any shortcut for rescue work.
- Do not try to leave the safe shelter to go back home until the local officials declare normalcy after flood and instruction to return home are not given.