

Safe Drinking Water After a Flood



How does water become contaminated in a flood?

- After a flood, assume that all water sources are contaminated until proven safe.
- Contaminated water can cause people to become sick.

How will I know if my water has been contaminated?

- Do not use water that has a dark color, has a smell, is cloudy, or contains floating material.
- There will be a public announcement over radio or television to boil the water. This is known as a “boil order.”

How do I purify my water?

- Water can be purified at home or safe water can be purchased.
- Water may either be boiled or regular household bleach may be added, such as Clorox or Purex brands or any store brand.
- To boil, bring water to a rolling boil and keep it boiling for approximately 3 minutes. Pour water into disinfected drinking container (instructions for disinfecting containers provided below). Store in refrigerator if possible.
- To use household bleach, strain the water through a coffee filter or cheese cloth to remove dirt and other particles. Use 1/8 teaspoon (or 6-8 drops from a dropper) of regular household bleach to a gallon of water. Let stand for 30 minutes. If water is still cloudy after 30 minutes, add another 1/8 teaspoon (or 6-8 drops from a dropper) of regular household bleach per gallon and let the water stand another 30 minutes.
- **Do not use more than the recommended amount of bleach. Large amounts can be poisonous.**

What are the best types of containers to use to store water?

- Use clean plastic or glass containers such as clean soft drink bottles or clean canning jars that have tight-fitting screw caps. Do not use plastic milk jugs because they do not seal well.
- Use clean disinfected containers only. Remember to disinfect them again each time they are refilled.

How do I disinfect containers to use for storing drinking water?

- Fill container with one gallon of clean water.
- Add one tablespoon of regular household bleach to the water in the container. (Let stand for 10 minutes, then pour out). Rinse the container with clean water.
- Fill container again with clean water, then cap the container for later use.