



Flood-Water Cleanup: **What you need to know**

After a flood, mold starts to grow within 24 to 48 hours inside buildings that have not dried out.

Mold causes serious health problems, like asthma attacks, eye and skin irritation, and allergic reactions. It can also cause severe infections in people with weak immune systems. Also, flood water can carry sewage and chemicals that put people at risk for illness from viruses and bacteria, as well as diseases from mosquitos and other parasites.

This is why it is important to completely dry out buildings and throw away water-damaged items as soon as you can after a flood. Before you get started, follow these tips to get the job done safely and effectively.

Safety first

Don't enter a building that has been flooded until you are sure it is safe. It is best to wait for local safety officials to make sure it is OK to enter. To prevent serious injury:

- Make sure the gas and electricity are off.
- Be on the look out for loose power lines.
- Check for sagging ceilings or floors, and stay away from them.
- Keep in mind that wet, muddy floors can be very slippery.
- Be very careful when using portable generators; they are for outside use only. Learn more at www.osha.gov/OshDoc/data_Hurricane_Facts/portable_generator_safety.pdf

Since children and people with breathing problems or weak immune systems should not be around mold, they should not help to clean up after a flood. Before you start to clean, protect your:

- **Mouth and nose** — Wear at least an N-95 respirator. If you will be working around mold for a long time, wear a half-face or full-face respirator.
- **Skin** — Wear gloves (non-latex, vinyl, nitrile, or rubber) and don't touch mold or moldy items with your bare hands.
- **Eyes** — Wear goggles that cover your eyes fully and keep out dust and small particles. Safety glasses or goggles with open vent holes won't protect you enough.



**For more information,
please call Member
Services at
1-888-276-2020
(TTY 1-888-765-9586).**

FirstChoice
by Select Health of South Carolina
 *Your Hometown Health Plan*

Healthy Connections 

Mold-cleaning tips

Open as many doors and windows as you can to get fresh air flowing. Open closets, cabinets, and doors to rooms so air can get into these spaces and dry them more quickly. Use a wet-vacuum to remove water from floors, rugs, and hard surfaces. Remove standing water and wet objects. Throw away items that were not cleaned or dried fully within 24 to 48 hours after they were wet with flood water.

- Clean with water and a detergent. Don't mix cleaning products like bleach and ammonia. This can cause harmful fumes.
- Remove drawers, wipe them clean, and let them dry fully before putting them back.
- It's a good idea to take doors off their hinges to remove mold.
- Clean up any mold before you paint or caulk so the mold won't keep growing.
- Shower and change clothes after leaving a mold site so you don't carry mold to other places or expose others to mold.
- If mold has not started to grow, use fans or dehumidifiers to dry things out. If mold has started to grow, don't use fans; they will cause the mold to spread.

(Note: Taking photos of the damage caused by the flood waters can help with property insurance claims.)

When to get extra help

It is easy to see mold when it is on clothing, walls, furniture, rugs, cardboard boxes, and books. But it can also grow in places where you can't see it, like behind walls and under rugs. Seeing or smelling mold after you have cleaned means it is still there and poses a health risk. If health issues like asthma, allergies, or skin problems get worse when you return to a building that has been flooded, it could mean mold is still there.

If you can't find the mold, or if the cleanup is too hard for you to do, you may have to get help from a qualified professional.

For questions about general services available through First Choice, please call Member Services at **1-888-276-2020** (TTY **1-888-765-9586**).



All images are used under license for illustrative purposes only. Any individual depicted is a model.

SH-162105 | FC-11182016-M-002