

Health Implications to consider before moving back into your flooded home

Gastrointestinal infections from flood water

In some instances raw sewage and animal waste may have been into some flooded homes. Contact with contaminated water, may contribute to outbreaks of unpleasant gastrointestinal infections. It is therefore important that precautions are taken to prevent any illness.

What to do:

- Try not to come into direct contact with flood water if at all possible, and never, ever drink it. Usually, tap water is unaffected by the floods and is safe to drink.
- If you have to go into the water, wear rubber boots and waterproof gloves.
- Wash your hands regularly, especially before eating. Use hand sanitising gel or wet wipes if water isn't available.
- Don't eat food that's touched flood water.
- Wear waterproof plasters on cuts and grazes.

Carbon monoxide poisoning

Pumps and generators used to dry buildings give out exhaust gases that can cause potentially lethal carbon monoxide poisoning if they're not used properly.

What to do:

- In the event of a power cut, don't use petrol or diesel generators inside the home.
- Make sure there's good ventilation if you use a portable heater to dry out indoor spaces.
- Central heating, dehumidifiers and good ventilation can also help dry out your home.

Damp and mould the effects on your health

Some people are more sensitive than others to damp and mould in the home, young children and the elderly are particularly vulnerable and those with existing conditions such as eczema, asthma, respiratory illness and those with a weakened immune system. Individuals in this situation should stay **away** from damp and mould and the Council would advocate not returning to your home if you are more sensitive.

How does it affect your health?

Moulds produce allergens (substances that can cause an allergic reaction), irritants and, sometimes, toxic substances. Inhaling or touching mould spores may cause an allergic reaction, such as sneezing, a runny nose, red eyes and skin rash. Moulds can also cause asthma attacks.

Causes of damp and mould

Mould and damp are caused by excess moisture in the home. Moisture in your home can be caused by leaking pipes, rising damp in basements or ground floors, or rain seeping in because of damage to the roof or around window frames or in this instance flooding.

You may also consider that even when the renovations are complete in your home and a dry certificate has been issued, there will still be a period where there is excess moisture in your home. A newly-built or renovated home may be damp if the water used when building and it takes time to dry out - for example, in the plaster on the walls. Excess moisture indoors can also be caused by condensation and advice can be sought from the Council on lifestyle condensation.