

What to do with your well after a flood

Flooding can bring harmful germs, chemicals, or debris into your well water. They can contaminate your water, which means they make it unsafe for drinking, washing, cooking, or preparing food.

Contamination isn't always easy to notice. Unsafe water may be cloudy, have more sediment, or have a different colour or smell than your usual safe water. Or it may look and smell the same.

Wells in pits or basements can also flood and become contaminated. Contamination can also seep down along the well casing or travel underground.

Follow these 5 steps to stay safe after your well has flooded:

1. Stop using your well water.

- **Do not** turn on the well pump after a flood. You risk electric shock or damage to your well and pump.
- Stop using your well water for drinking, cooking, and washing.
- Use water that's safe to drink. For example, use bottled water, a municipal truck-fill, or a neighbour's well water that wasn't at risk of flooding.
- If you don't have safe water to use, boil your well water for 1 minute at a full boil (strong boil with lots of large bubbles) before using it.
- If you think your well is contaminated with chemicals, **do not** use the water until a licensed water well contractor checks your well. You'll also need to test your water to know it's safe.

2. Check your well and pump.

- After flood waters have gone down, and the pump and electrical system are completely dry, have a licensed water well contractor check your well and plumbing. Flood waters can carry debris like wood, rocks, and metal. They can damage your well casing, electrical parts, and the pump. The contractor may need to clean debris from the water pump or plumbing.
- **Do not** turn on the pump until a qualified electrician or licensed water well contractor checks the wiring.

3. Have your well and plumbing disinfected.

- Have a licensed water well contractor disinfect your water and plumbing system.
- If you choose to disinfect your well and plumbing system yourself, follow the procedures from the Alberta government's Working Well fact sheets at alberta.ca/working-well-resources.aspx or talk to a public health inspector.

4. Test your water.

- Test your well water for bacteria so you know it's safe **before** you use it again. You can get test bottles from Alberta Health Services Environmental Public Health office. Find your local office at ahs.ca/eph.
- If you think the contamination is chemical, talk to a public health inspector to get the right testing for your water.

5. Learn to protect your well from future floods.

- Talk to a licensed water well contractor to learn what you can do to help protect your well from future floods.

For more information, contact Alberta Health Services Environmental Public Health at 1-833-476-4743 or [submit a request online](https://alberta.ca/submit-a-request-online) at ahs.ca/eph.