This resource is available from healthed.govt.nz
or your local authorised provider
HE3390 | November 2026

El Niño 2026/27

National Public Health Service Community Resource Pack

For queries related to this pack contact: **phem.PIM@tewhatuora.govt.nz**

Last updated 12 November 2026

V1.3

Te Kāwanatanga o Aotearoa
New Zealand Government

Health New Zealand
Te Whatu Ora

Nau mai haere mai

A strong El Niño is expected to influence Aotearoa New Zealand's weather this spring and summer. This will impact different communities and regions in different ways.

Effects may include hot and dry conditions, water shortages, wildfires, strong winds, heavy rainfall and flooding.

This pack provides:

- advice and key messages on possible El Niño public health risks
- information on preparing for you, your family (whānau) and your community
- links to resources and websites
- signposting to health advice.

Visit the El Niño Health NZ Hub: www.healthnz.govt.nz/el-nino

Possible health risks


Heatwaves


Droughts and water restrictions


Wildfires

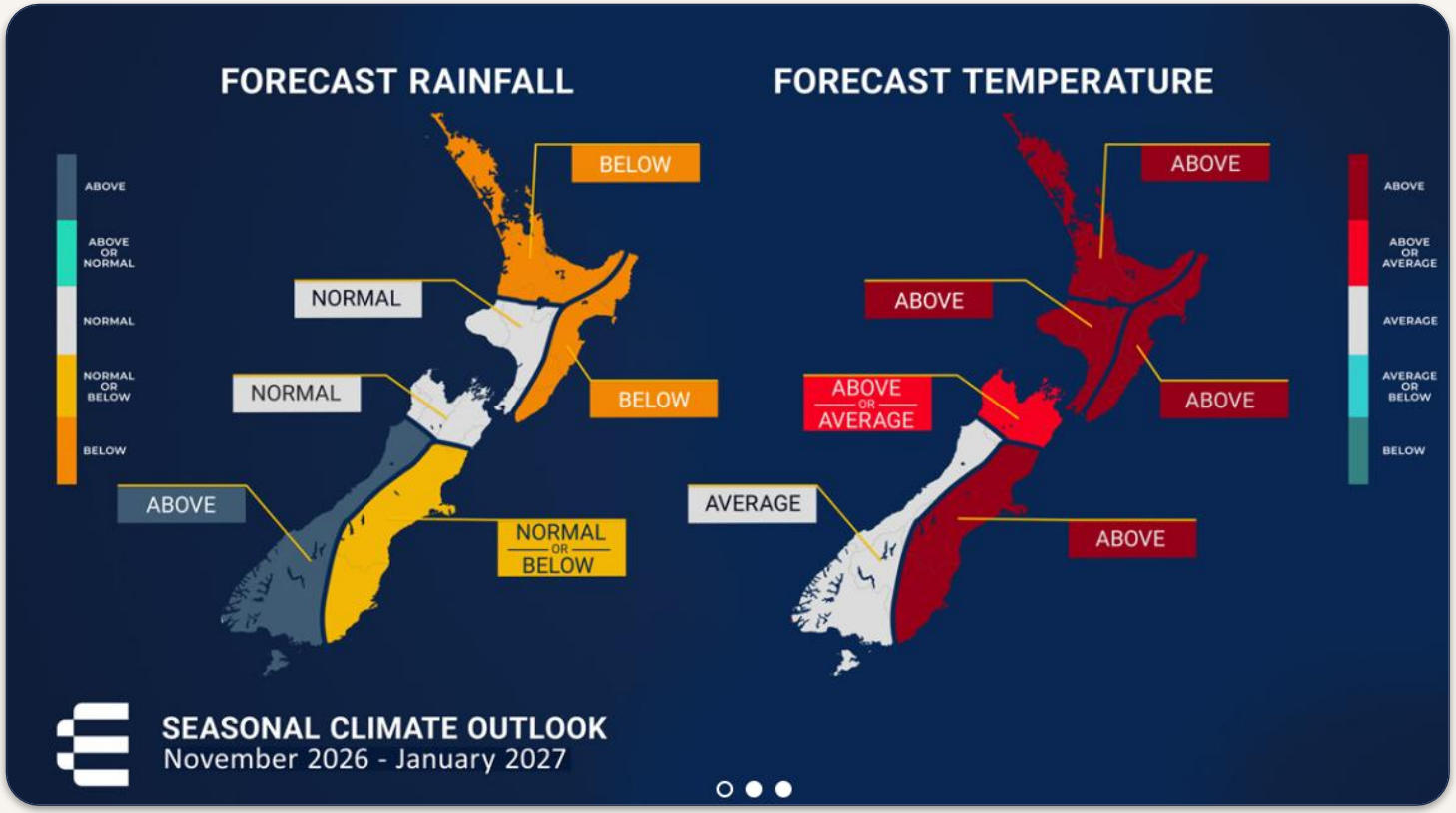

Flooding


Strong winds

Forecasted conditions map

An overview of forecasted conditions is available from Earth Science NZ

Live information is available via its Seasonal Climate Outlook



Preparing for El Niño



Stay informed

Keep up to date with weather forecasts over summer.



Prepare your emergency plan

Have a household or business emergency plan. For advice on what should go in it, visit getready.govt.nz.



Get to know your neighbours

Have a plan for checking in with each other, and how you can work together to look after your community.



Prepare your emergency grab-bag (kete)

Make sure you have a supply of food, medications, pet food, and baby supplies. Store at least three litres of water per person per day you could be without water.



Monitor your water tank levels if you live in a drought prone area

If your home uses a private roof water tank, start monitoring your water levels now. If it's running low, it'll need a clean and topping up by a registered bulk water supplier.

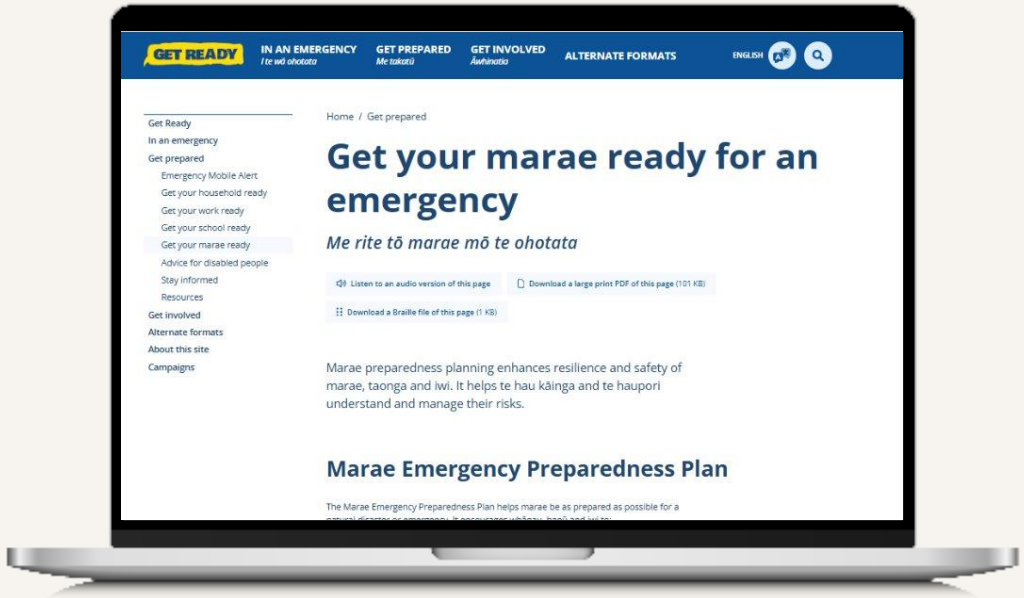


Check in with whānau who may be at greater risk

Older adults, pregnant women, babies, young children, people with disabilities and people with serious long-term health conditions will be more at risk during heatwaves, drought and wildfires. Develop a plan with them for emergencies too.

Sharing information with whānau and communities

- Preparing as a community can help make it easier to get ready, and ensures whānau can look out for each other if natural disasters occur.
- You can use this pack to support this, working alongside mana whenua, iwi, hapū, marae, hauora Māori providers, Pacific health providers, disability providers and other local partners. This can be particularly valuable for marae, papakāinga, collective housing and people using shared water supplies.
- For more advice visit: getready.govt.nz



In this pack

- Alternate format resources
- Heatwaves and extreme heat
- Drought and water restrictions
- Wildfires and smoke
- Flooding
- Seeking health advice in an emergency
- Mental wellbeing during emergencies
- Event guidance
- Pests



Alternate formats

This section highlights resources currently available via **getready.govt.nz**.

Further alternate format translated resources are currently in development and once ready will be published at **healthnz.govt.nz/el-nino**

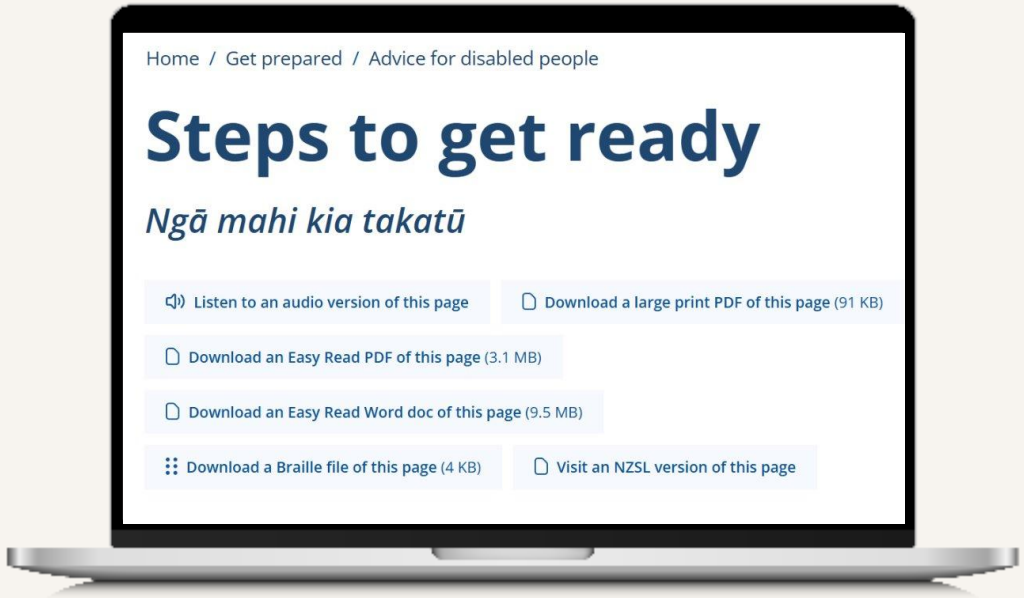
Get Ready alternate format resources

Alternate format resources	
Description	Information on getting ready for and responding to natural disasters
Resource type	Various
Audience	People in areas affected by extreme weather
Language	Audio, large print, easy read, braille, NZSL
File type	Various
URL	getready.govt.nz/alternate-formats



Get Ready advice for disabled people

- Advice for disabled people on getting ready for emergencies is available at: getready.govt.nz/steps-to-get-ready
- This is available in English, NZSL, large print, Easy Read, braille and audio.
- It includes advice on making a plan, activating a support network, essential supplies, and accessing help and advice in an emergency.



Alternate formats



Heatwaves and extreme heat



How can heat affect our health?

Excessive heat can cause:

- heat rash
- sunburn
- heat cramps
- heat exhaustion
- heatstroke
- sunstroke
- dehydration.

Who's at greatest risk?

While heatwaves can be dangerous for lots of people, those at greater risk during heatwaves can include:

- babies
- pregnant women
- young children
- older people
- people with existing health conditions or on certain medications
- people living alone
- people working outdoors.

What you can do to prepare

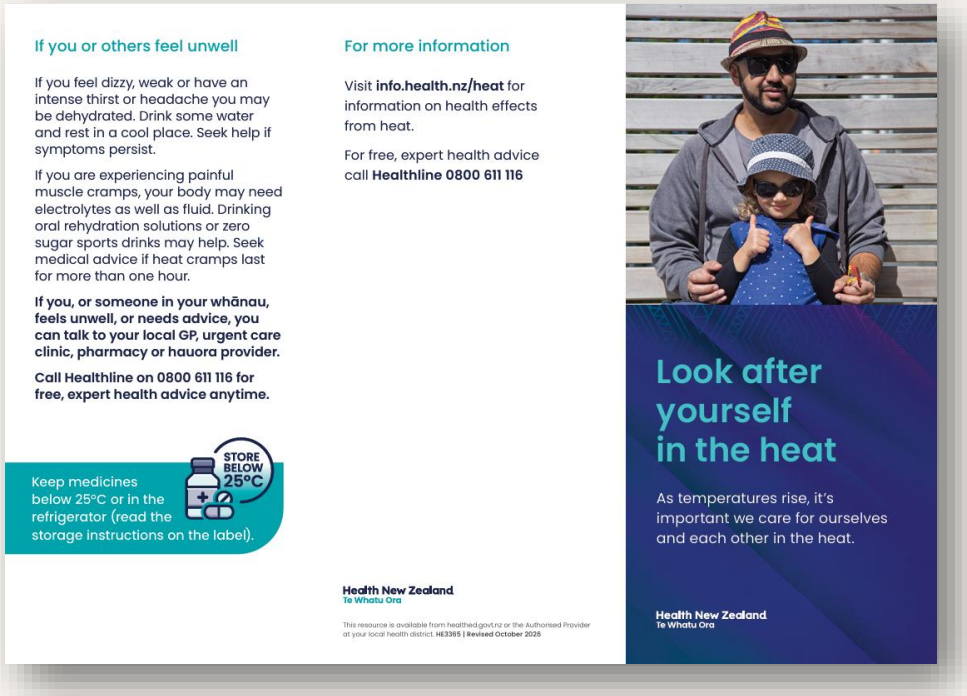
- ✓ Keep up to date with weather forecasts.
- ✓ Prepare your house. When it's hot, pull your curtains or cover your windows to keep your house cool. Have windows open to catch the breeze.
- ✓ If you have air conditioning, make sure that it is working well.
- ✓ If you do not have air conditioning or if there is a power outage, identify locations where you can go to stay cool. For example, a library, mall, marae, or shaded area outdoors.
- ✓ Make sure you have a supply of food, water, medications, pet food and baby supplies to last a few days.
- ✓ Make sure all your animals and livestock have access to (preferably natural) shade, and a reliable and safe water supply.

Staying safe during a heatwave

- ✓ Keep your home cool by opening windows to catch the breeze and keeping curtains or blinds closed to keep the sun out.
- ✓ Stay in an air-conditioned indoor location as much as you can. If you do not have air conditioning, try and find somewhere else that is cool. For example, a library, mall, marae or shaded area outdoors.
- ✓ Avoid outdoor activities if you can. If you have to be outside, try to go out in the early morning or evening when the heat intensity is lowest. Pace yourself and be sunsmart: wear loose, lightweight, light-coloured clothing and sunscreen.
- ✓ Check on people in your support network, particularly older people, people living alone, disabled people, and others who may need additional support.
- ✓ Keep drinking water. Keep you and your pets hydrated. Drink more fluids, regardless of how active you are, and do not wait until you are thirsty to drink.
- ✓ Seek medical help if you're feeling weak or dizzy, or if you have intense thirst or a headache.

Heat resources

Look after yourself in the heat flyer	
Description	Advice on staying safe during hot weather
Resource type	DLE Flyer
Audience	People in areas affected by heatwaves
Language	English
Size	A4 (folded DLE)
File type	PDF
URL	https://healthed.govt.nz/collections/topic-environmental-health/products/look-after-yourself-in-the-heat-he3365



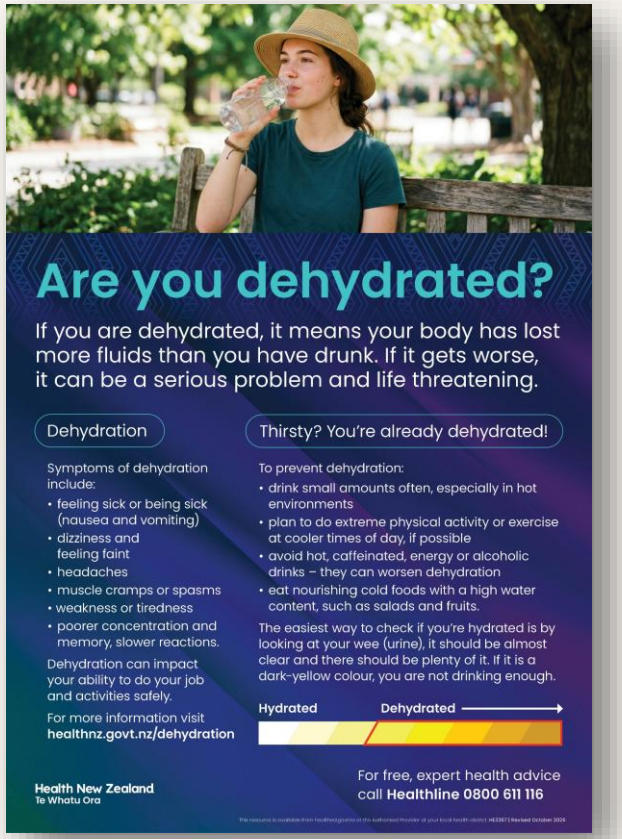
Heat resources

Look after yourself in the heat poster	
Description	Advice on staying safe during hot weather
Resource type	A4 poster
Audience	People in areas affected by heatwaves
Language	English
Size	A4
File type	PDF
URL	https://healthed.govt.nz/collections/topic-environmental-health/products/look-after-yourself-in-the-heat-poster-he3366



Heat resources

Are you dehydrated? poster	
Description	Information on the risks of dehydration and checking if you're dehydrated
Resource type	Poster
Audience	People in areas affected by heatwaves
Language	English
Size	A3
File type	PDF
URL	https://healthed.govt.nz/collections/topic-environmental-health/products/are-you-dehydrated-he3367



Heat resources

Heat safety poster	
Description	Advice on overheating symptoms and seeking health advice
Resource type	Poster
Audience	People in areas affected by heatwaves
Language	English
Size	A3
File type	PDF
URL	https://healthed.govt.nz/collections/topic-environmental-health/products/heat-safety-he3368



Heat resources

Social media tile	
Description	Advice on staying cool during a heatwave
Resource type	Social media image
Audience	People in areas affected by heatwaves
Language	English
Size	1080 x 1080px
File type	JPG
URL	https://healthed.govt.nz/collections/topic-el-nino/products/avoid-floodwater-if-possible-he3392-1



Heat resources

Keeping healthy outdoors flyer	
Description	Health and safety information for people who are camping, tramping or walking outdoors
Resource type	DLE Flyer
Language	English
Size	A4 (folded DLE)
File type	PDF
URL	healthed.govt.nz/products/keeping-healthy-outdoors



For more information

healthnz.govt.nz/heat

Health effects from heat, symptoms, and protecting yourself and your whānau.

getready.govt.nz/emergency/heat

Advice on what to do before, during and after extreme heat and heatwaves.



Drought and water restrictions



How can drought and water restrictions affect our health?

- Water shortages can occur during low rainfall or natural disasters, or if there is a contamination of a water supply. In these situations, water restrictions may apply, or a 'boil water', 'do not drink water', or 'do not use water' notice may be issued.
- When water is limited it increases the risks of dehydration if people are unable to access safe water or are drinking less, especially in hot weather.
- The risk of gastro illnesses also increases if water sources run low and become unsafe, or if people are unable to wash their hands properly.

Who's at greatest risk?

- Dehydration is particularly dangerous for babies, young children, older people, those with existing health conditions or on certain medications.
- Households with roof water tank supplies are at greater risk of water supplies running low.

Getting prepared if your house is on roof water tank

- ✓ Start monitoring your water levels now if you're in an area that may experience reduced rainfall this spring and summer.
- ✓ If you need to top up your tank only use a registered bulk water supplier.
- ✓ Dry weather can affect water quality. Keep roofs, gutters, screens and tanks clean to reduce the risk of contamination.
- ✓ Clean your tank before you get a fill up or if water levels run low. If possible, tank cleaning should be carried out by tank cleaning contractors.
- ✓ Water filters for bacteria and UV water treatment units should be regularly cleaned and maintained, especially when water levels are low.
- ✓ A heavy rainfall after drought can flush greater amounts of contaminants into the tank and also stir up sediment. If this occurs, use a first flush diverter, or boil or treat the water.
- ✓ If you are unsure whether the water is safe to drink boil it, or treat it using bleach or water purification tablets.

Getting prepared if your water is supplied by the Council or a private supplier

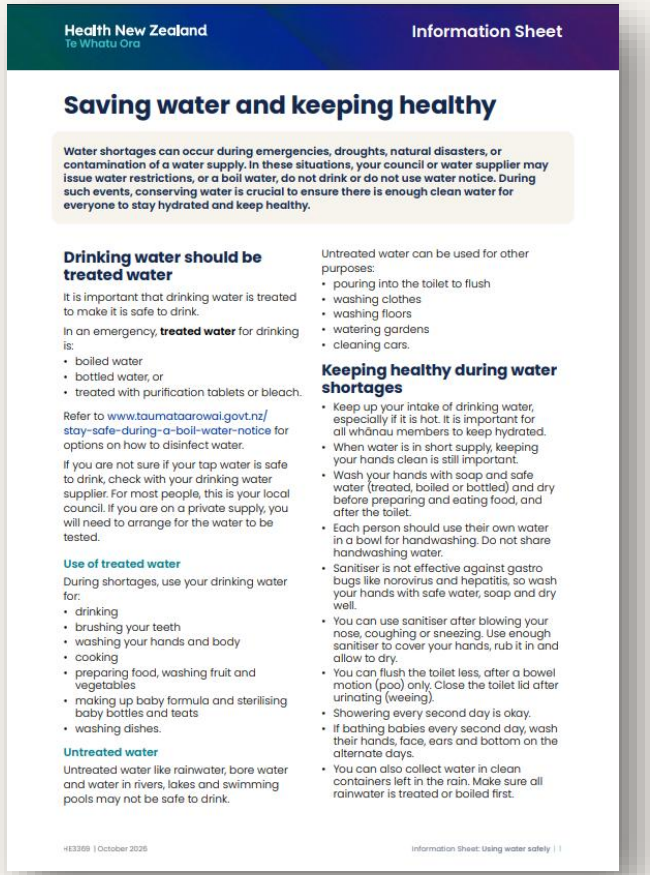
- ✓ Monitor for water restriction advice and conserve your water if needed.
- ✓ Use water wisely at home, on the farm and in your community.

Key messages during water shortages

- Continue drinking water as usual, especially if the weather is hot. Make sure babies, young children and older people continue to drink plenty of water too.
- Prioritise water in this order:
  - drinking
  - making up baby formula and sterilising baby bottles and teats
  - brushing your teeth
  - washing your hands and body
  - preparing food, washing fruit and vegetables
  - washing dishes.
- Keep your hands clean to prevent illness. Remember to wash or sanitise your hands before preparing and eating food, after using the toilet, and after blowing your nose, coughing or sneezing.
- If your hands are visibly dirty from activities like gardening, wash them with soap and water for at least 20 seconds and then dry them completely.
- If water is extremely limited, keep a bowl of clean water with disinfectant for handwashing, but do not share bowls of water.
- If your hands have no visible dirt, you can use alcohol-based sanitiser. Use enough to cover your hands, rub it in and allow it to dry.
- You can flush the toilet when necessary, for instance after a poo (bowel motion). Close the toilet lid after weeing (urinating).
- You can also put untreated water into the toilet to flush it.
- Bathe your baby (pēpi) every second day. On alternate days, wash their faces, ears, hands and bottom. If they have a toilet accident, clean them as usual. Continue to wash nappies the usual way.

Saving water resources

Saving water and keeping healthy information sheet	
Description	Advice on keeping healthy during water shortages and water restrictions
Resource type	Information sheet
Audience	People in areas affected by drought or water restrictions
Language	English
Size	A4
File type	PDF
URL	https://healthed.govt.nz/products/saving-water-and-keeping-healthy-english-he3369



Health New Zealand
Te Whatu Ora

Information Sheet

Saving water and keeping healthy

Water shortages can occur during emergencies, droughts, natural disasters, or contamination of a water supply. In these situations, your council or water supplier may issue water restrictions, or a boil water, do not drink or do not use water notice. During such events, conserving water is crucial to ensure there is enough clean water for everyone to stay hydrated and keep healthy.

Drinking water should be treated water

It is important that drinking water is treated to make it is safe to drink.

In an emergency, **treated water** for drinking is:

- boiled water
- bottled water, or
- treated with purification tablets or bleach.

Refer to www.taumataarowai.govt.nz/stay-safe-during-a-boil-water-notice for options on how to disinfect water.

If you are not sure if your tap water is safe to drink, check with your drinking water supplier. For most people, this is your local council. If you are on a private supply, you will need to arrange for the water to be tested.

Use of treated water

During shortages, use your drinking water for:

- drinking
- brushing your teeth
- washing your hands and body
- cooking
- preparing food, washing fruit and vegetables
- making up baby formula and sterilising baby bottles and teats
- washing dishes.

Untreated water

Untreated water like rainwater, bore water and water in rivers, lakes and swimming pools may not be safe to drink.

Untreated water can be used for other purposes:

- pouring into the toilet to flush
- washing clothes
- washing floors
- watering gardens
- cleaning cars.

Keeping healthy during water shortages

- Keep up your intake of drinking water, especially if it is hot. It is important for all whānau members to keep hydrated.
- When water is in short supply, keeping your hands clean is still important.
- Wash your hands with soap and safe water (treated, boiled or bottled) and dry before preparing and eating food, and after the toilet.
- Each person should use their own water in a bowl for handwashing. Do not share handwashing water.
- Sanitiser is not effective against gastro bugs like norovirus and hepatitis, so wash your hands with safe water, soap and dry well.
- You can use sanitiser after blowing your nose, coughing or sneezing. Use enough sanitiser to cover your hands, rub it in and allow to dry.
- You can flush the toilet less, after a bowel motion (poo) only. Close the toilet lid after urinating (weeing).
- Showering every second day is okay.
- If bathing babies every second day, wash their hands, face, ears and bottom on the alternate days.
- You can also collect water in clean containers left in the rain. Make sure all rainwater is treated or boiled first.

HE3369 | October 2026

Information Sheet: Using water safely | 1

Drought and water restrictions

Using water safely resources

Using water safely social media tiles	
Description	Advice on keeping healthy during water shortages or water restrictions
Resource type	Social media tiles
Audience	People in areas affected by drought or water restrictions
Language	English
Size	1080 x 1080px
File type	PNG
URLs	Available via the HealthEd El Niño collection: healthed.govt.nz/collections/topic-el-nino









For more information

healthnz.govt.nz/saving-water-and-keeping-healthy

Advice on saving water and keeping healthy during water restrictions and shortages.

taumataarowai.govt.nz/drinking-water-suppliers-and-operators/for-drinking-water-suppliers/how-to-guidance/responding-to-natural-hazard-emergencies

Guidance on natural hazards, how they can affect drinking water, and how to stay safe.



Wildfires and smoke

How can wildfires and smoke affect our health?

- Wildfires are unpredictable and can spread quickly, risking loss of life and property.
- The smoke from wildfires may cause coughing, shortness of breath, difficulties breathing, and throat and eye irritation.
- Ash and debris from fires can also contaminate water systems and veggie gardens.

Who's at greatest risk?

- Smoke inhalation can be particularly dangerous for older people, young children, those with medical conditions (such as asthma or heart disease) and pregnant women.

How you get can get prepared:

- ✓ Make sure your home or business is Fire Smart. For advice on avoiding starting rural fires, visit: checkitsalright.nz.
- ✓ To make a plan on protecting your property from wildfire and evacuating, visit: getready.govt.nz/wildfires

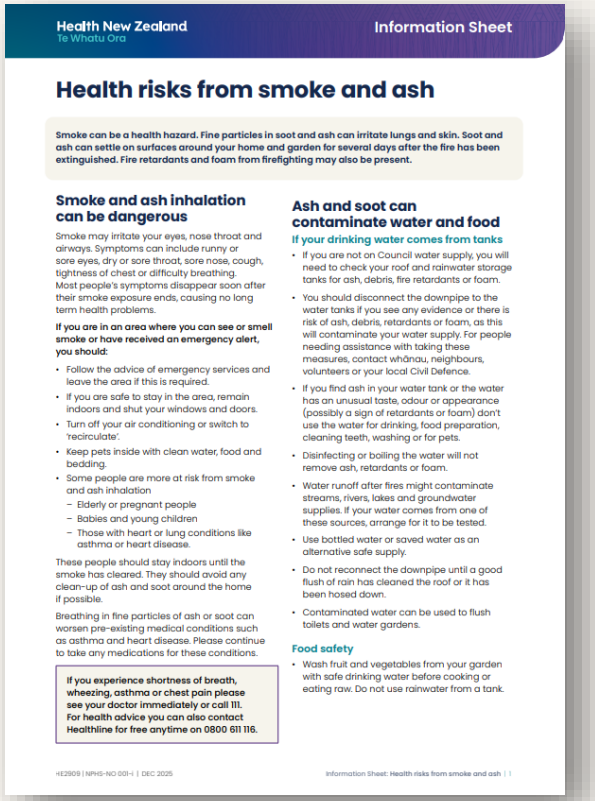
If you can see or smell smoke:

- **If in doubt, get out!** Wildfires move quickly. If you can see smoke or flames from a wildfire and you feel unsafe, don't wait for an official warning to leave. Evacuate immediately. Call 111 if your life or property is threatened or you can't evacuate on your own.
- **If it's safe to stay in-place:**
  - remain indoors and shut your windows and doors
  - turn off your air conditioning or switch to 'recirculate' if you have it
  - disconnect your downpipe if it connects to a water tank
  - seal up windows and doors with blankets and towels
  - avoid frying or lighting indoor fires, like candles and wood burners.
- **If you can't safely shelter in place, go to a Civil Defence evacuation centre or emergency hub**.

Wildfires and smoke

Wildfires and smoke resources

Health risks from smoke and ash information sheet	
Description	Advice on staying safe during and after a fire
Resource type	Information sheet
Audience	People in areas affected by wildfires
Language	English (translated versions are being developed)
Size	A4
File type	PDF
URL	healthed.govt.nz/products/health-risks-from-smoke-and-ash-he2909



Health New Zealand
Te Whatu Ora

Information Sheet

Health risks from smoke and ash

Smoke can be a health hazard. Fine particles in soot and ash can irritate lungs and skin. Soot and ash can settle on surfaces around your home and garden for several days after the fire has been extinguished. Fire retardants and foam from firefighting may also be present.

Smoke and ash inhalation can be dangerous

Smoke may irritate your eyes, nose throat and airways. Symptoms can include runny or sore eyes, dry or sore throat, sore nose, cough, tightness of chest or difficulty breathing. Most people's symptoms disappear soon after their smoke exposure ends, causing no long term health problems.

If you are in an area where you can see or smell smoke or have received an emergency alert, you should:

- Follow the advice of emergency services and leave the area if this is required.
- If you are safe to stay in the area, remain indoors and shut your windows and doors.
- Turn off your air conditioning or switch to 'recirculate'.
- Keep pets inside with clean water, food and bedding.
- Some people are more at risk from smoke and ash inhalation
  - Elderly or pregnant people
  - Babies and young children
  - Those with heart or lung conditions like asthma or heart disease.

These people should stay indoors until the smoke has cleared. They should avoid any clean-up of ash and soot around the home if possible.

Breathing in fine particles of ash or soot can worsen pre-existing medical conditions such as asthma and heart disease. Please continue to take any medications for these conditions.

If you experience shortness of breath, wheezing, asthma or chest pain please see your doctor immediately or call 111. For health advice you can also contact Healthline for free anytime on 0800 611 116.

Ash and soot can contaminate water and food

If your drinking water comes from tanks

- If you are not on Council water supply, you will need to check your roof and rainwater storage tanks for ash, debris, fire retardants or foam.
- You should disconnect the downpipe to the water tanks if you see any evidence or there is risk of ash, debris, retardants or foam, as this will contaminate your water supply. For people needing assistance with taking these measures, contact whānau, neighbours, volunteers or your local Civil Defence.
- If you find ash in your water tank or the water has an unusual taste, odour or appearance (possibly a sign of retardants or foam) don't use the water for drinking, food preparation, cleaning teeth, washing or for pets.
- Disinfecting or boiling the water will not remove ash, retardants or foam.
- Water runoff after fires might contaminate streams, rivers, lakes and groundwater supplies. If your water comes from one of these sources, arrange for it to be tested.
- Use bottled water or saved water as an alternative safe supply.
- Do not reconnect the downpipe until a good flush of rain has cleaned the roof or it has been hosed down.
- Contaminated water can be used to flush toilets and water gardens.

Food safety

- Wash fruit and vegetables from your garden with safe drinking water before cooking or eating raw. Do not use rainwater from a tank.

For more information

healthnz.govt.nz/fires-smoke

Health advice on staying safe during and after fires

www.checkitsalright.nz

Fire and Emergency New Zealand's advice on being fire safe and reducing the risk of wildfires over summer



Flooding



How can floods affect our health?

- Floodwaters may contain hazards you can't see, be electrically charged, or contaminated with farm run-off, animal and human sewage or chemicals.
- Flash-floods can be particularly dangerous. They occur rapidly, may carry hazards, and increase the risk of drowning.
- After a flood, there may also be risks from contaminated water and food, mould, silt, and dust (when silt dries).

How you get can get prepared

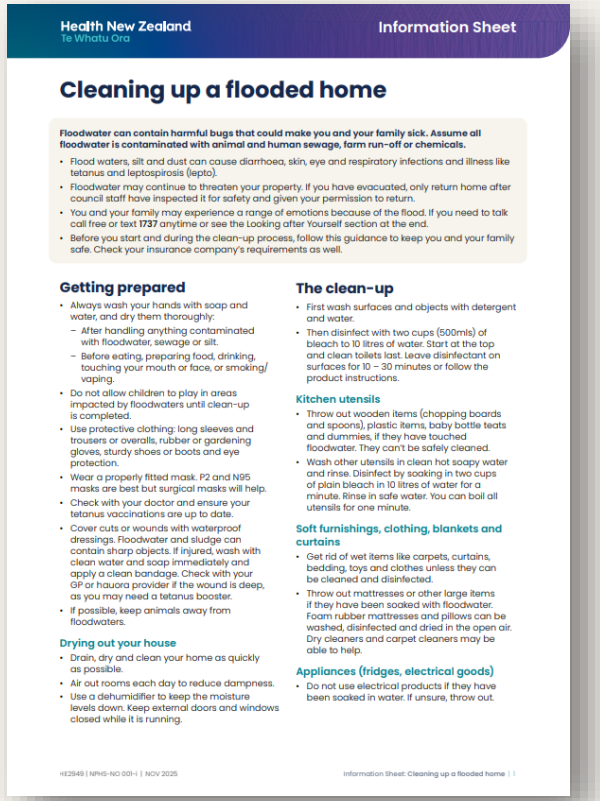
- ✓ Find out from your local council if your home or business is at risk from flooding and how they'll alert you if you need to evacuate.
- ✓ Practise your emergency plan and your evacuation route to higher ground.
- ✓ Take measures to reduce potential flood damage. If you have insurance, make sure it covers you for flood damage.
- ✓ Get protective gear for cleaning up. You may need a face mask, gloves, gumboots and bleach for decontaminating surfaces.
- ✓ Start making your flood emergency plan: getready.govt.nz/floods

What to do during and after a flood:

- During heavy rain, listen to your local radio stations for civil defence advice and follow instructions.
- Stay out of floodwaters and do not let children play in it.
- Once it is safe to do so, clean up, drain and dry out your house as quickly as possible.
- Make sure food and water are not contaminated.

Flooding resources

Cleaning up a flooded home information sheet	
Description	Advice on drying out your house, cleaning up safely, and staying safe
Resource type	Information sheet
Audience	People in areas affected by flooding
Language	English (translated versions are being developed)
Size	A4
File type	PDF
URL	healthed.govt.nz/collections/topic-disasters-and-emergencies/products/cleaning-up-a-flooded-home-he2949



Health New Zealand
Te Whatu Ora

Information Sheet

Cleaning up a flooded home

Floodwater can contain harmful bugs that could make you and your family sick. Assume all floodwater is contaminated with animal and human sewage, farm run-off or chemicals.

- Flood waters, silt and dust can cause diarrhoea, skin, eye and respiratory infections and illness like tetanus and leptospirosis (lepto).
- Floodwater may continue to threaten your property. If you have evacuated, only return home after council staff have inspected it for safety and given your permission to return.
- You and your family may experience a range of emotions because of the flood. If you need to talk call free or text **1737** anytime or see the Looking after Yourself section at the end.
- Before you start and during the clean-up process, follow this guidance to keep you and your family safe. Check your insurance company's requirements as well.

Getting prepared

- Always wash your hands with soap and water, and dry them thoroughly:
  - After handling anything contaminated with floodwater, sewage or silt.
  - Before eating, preparing food, drinking, touching your mouth or face, or smoking/vaping.
- Do not allow children to play in areas impacted by floodwaters until clean-up is completed.
- Use protective clothing: long sleeves and trousers or overalls, rubber or gardening gloves, sturdy shoes or boots and eye protection.
- Wear a properly fitted mask. P2 and N95 masks are best but surgical masks will help.
- Check with your doctor and ensure your tetanus vaccinations are up to date.
- Cover cuts or wounds with waterproof dressings. Floodwater and sludge can contain sharp objects. If injured, wash with clean water and soap immediately and apply a clean bandage. Check with your GP or hauora provider if the wound is deep, as you may need a tetanus booster.
- If possible, keep animals away from floodwaters.

Drying out your house

- Drain, dry and clean your home as quickly as possible.
- Air out rooms each day to reduce dampness.
- Use a dehumidifier to keep the moisture levels down. Keep external doors and windows closed while it is running.

The clean-up

- First wash surfaces and objects with detergent and water.
- Then disinfect with two cups (500mls) of bleach to 10 litres of water. Start at the top and clean toilets last. Leave disinfectant on surfaces for 10 – 30 minutes or follow the product instructions.

Kitchen utensils

- Throw out wooden items (chopping boards and spoons), plastic items, baby bottle teats and dummies, if they have touched floodwater. They can't be safely cleaned.
- Wash other utensils in clean hot soapy water and rinse. Disinfect by soaking in two cups of plain bleach in 10 litres of water for a minute. Rinse in safe water. You can boil all utensils for one minute.

Soft furnishings, clothing, blankets and curtains

- Get rid of wet items like carpets, curtains, bedding, toys and clothes unless they can be cleaned and disinfected.
- Throw out mattresses or other large items if they have been soaked with floodwater. Foam rubber mattresses and pillows can be washed, disinfected and dried in the open air. Dry cleaners and carpet cleaners may be able to help.

Appliances (fridges, electrical goods)

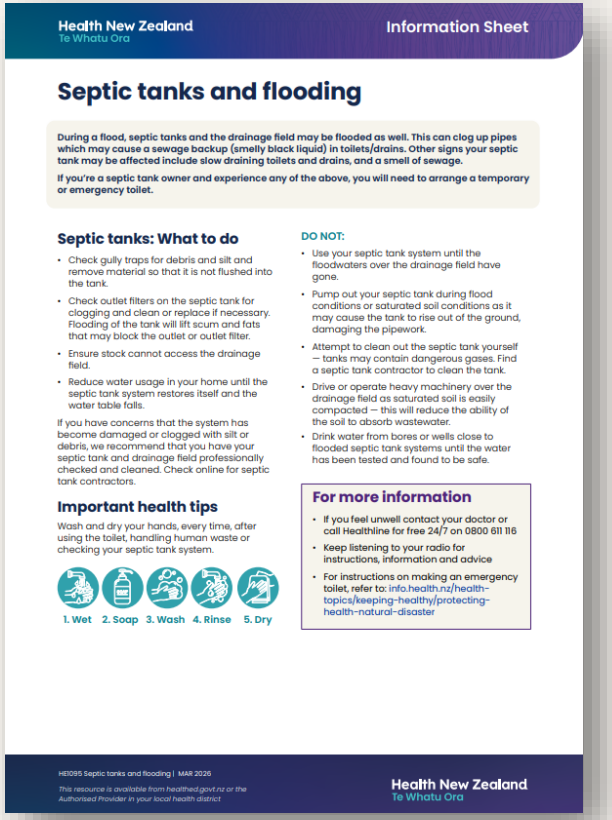
- Do not use electrical products if they have been soaked in water. If unsure, throw out.

HE2949 | NPHS-NO 001-1 | NOV 2025

Information Sheet: Cleaning up a flooded home | 1

Flooding resources

Septic tanks and flooding information sheet	
Description	Advice for septic tank owners following flooding
Resource type	Information sheet
Audience	People in areas affected by flooding
Language	English
Size	A4
File type	PDF
URL	healthed.govt.nz/collections/topic-disasters-and-emergencies/products/septic-tanks-and-flooding-he1095



Health New Zealand
Te Whatu Ora

Information Sheet

Septic tanks and flooding

During a flood, septic tanks and the drainage field may be flooded as well. This can clog up pipes which may cause a sewage backup (smelly black liquid) in toilets/drains. Other signs your septic tank may be affected include slow draining toilets and drains, and a smell of sewage.

If you're a septic tank owner and experience any of the above, you will need to arrange a temporary or emergency toilet.

Septic tanks: What to do

- Check gully traps for debris and silt and remove material so that it is not flushed into the tank.
- Check outlet filters on the septic tank for clogging and clean or replace if necessary. Flooding of the tank will lift scum and fats that may block the outlet or outlet filter.
- Ensure stock cannot access the drainage field.
- Reduce water usage in your home until the septic tank system restores itself and the water table falls.

If you have concerns that the system has become damaged or clogged with silt or debris, we recommend that you have your septic tank and drainage field professionally checked and cleaned. Check online for septic tank contractors.

Important health tips

Wash and dry your hands, every time, after using the toilet, handling human waste or checking your septic tank system.

1. Wet 2. Soap 3. Wash 4. Rinse 5. Dry

DO NOT:

- Use your septic tank system until the floodwaters over the drainage field have gone.
- Pump out your septic tank during flood conditions or saturated soil conditions as it may cause the tank to rise out of the ground, damaging the pipework.
- Attempt to clean out the septic tank yourself – tanks may contain dangerous gases. Find a septic tank contractor to clean the tank.
- Drive or operate heavy machinery over the drainage field as saturated soil is easily compacted – this will reduce the ability of the soil to absorb wastewater.
- Drink water from bores or wells close to flooded septic tank systems until the water has been tested and found to be safe.

For more information

- If you feel unwell contact your doctor or call Healthline for free 24/7 on 0800 611 116
- Keep listening to your radio for instructions, information and advice
- For instructions on making an emergency toilet, refer to: info.health.nz/health-topics/keeping-healthy/protecting-health-natural-disaster

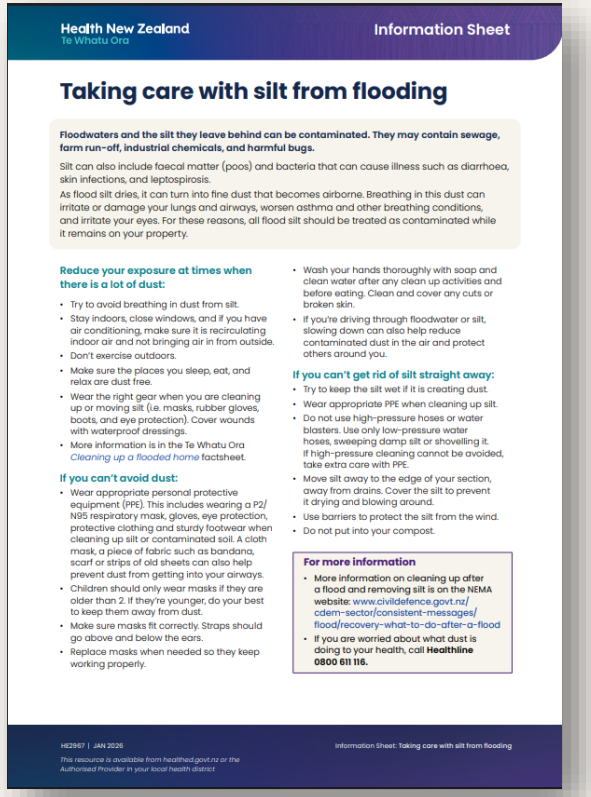
HE1095 Septic tanks and flooding | MAR 2026

This resource is available from healthed.govt.nz or the Authorised Provider in your local health district

Health New Zealand
Te Whatu Ora

Flooding resources

Taking care with silt from flooding information sheet	
Description	Advice on cleaning up silt after flooding
Resource type	Information sheet
Audience	People in areas affected by flooding
Language	English
Size	A4
File type	PDF
URL	healthed.govt.nz/collections/topic-disasters-and-emergencies/products/taking-care-with-silt-from-flooding-he2967



Health New Zealand
Te Whatu Ora

Information Sheet

Taking care with silt from flooding

Floodwaters and the silt they leave behind can be contaminated. They may contain sewage, farm run-off, industrial chemicals, and harmful bugs.

Silt can also include faecal matter (poos) and bacteria that can cause illness such as diarrhoea, skin infections, and leptospirosis.

As flood silt dries, it can turn into fine dust that becomes airborne. Breathing in this dust can irritate or damage your lungs and airways, worsen asthma and other breathing conditions, and irritate your eyes. For these reasons, all flood silt should be treated as contaminated while it remains on your property.

Reduce your exposure at times when there is a lot of dust:

- Try to avoid breathing in dust from silt.
- Stay indoors, close windows, and if you have air conditioning, make sure it is recirculating indoor air and not bringing air in from outside.
- Don't exercise outdoors.
- Make sure the places you sleep, eat, and relax are dust free.
- Wear the right gear when you are cleaning up or moving silt (i.e. masks, rubber gloves, boots, and eye protection). Cover wounds with waterproof dressings.
- More information is in the Te Whatu Ora *Cleaning up a flooded home* factsheet.

If you can't avoid dust:

- Wear appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE). This includes wearing a P2/N95 respiratory mask, gloves, eye protection, protective clothing and sturdy footwear when cleaning up silt or contaminated soil. A cloth mask, a piece of fabric such as bandana, scarf or strips of old sheets can also help prevent dust from getting into your airways.
- Children should only wear masks if they are older than 2. If they're younger, do your best to keep them away from dust.
- Make sure masks fit correctly. Straps should go above and below the ears.
- Replace masks when needed so they keep working properly.
- Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and clean water after any clean up activities and before eating. Clean and cover any cuts or broken skin.
- If you're driving through floodwater or silt, slowing down can also help reduce contaminated dust in the air and protect others around you.

If you can't get rid of silt straight away:

- Try to keep the silt wet if it is creating dust.
- Wear appropriate PPE when cleaning up silt.
- Do not use high-pressure hoses or water blasters. Use only low-pressure water hoses, sweeping damp silt or shovelling it. If high-pressure cleaning cannot be avoided, take extra care with PPE.
- Move silt away to the edge of your section, away from drains. Cover the silt to prevent it drying and blowing around.
- Use barriers to protect the silt from the wind.
- Do not put into your compost.

For more information

- More information on cleaning up after a flood and removing silt is on the NEMA website: www.civildefence.govt.nz/cdem-sector/consistent-messages/flood/recovery-what-to-do-after-a-flood
- If you are worried about what dust is doing to your health, call **Healthline 0800 611 116.**

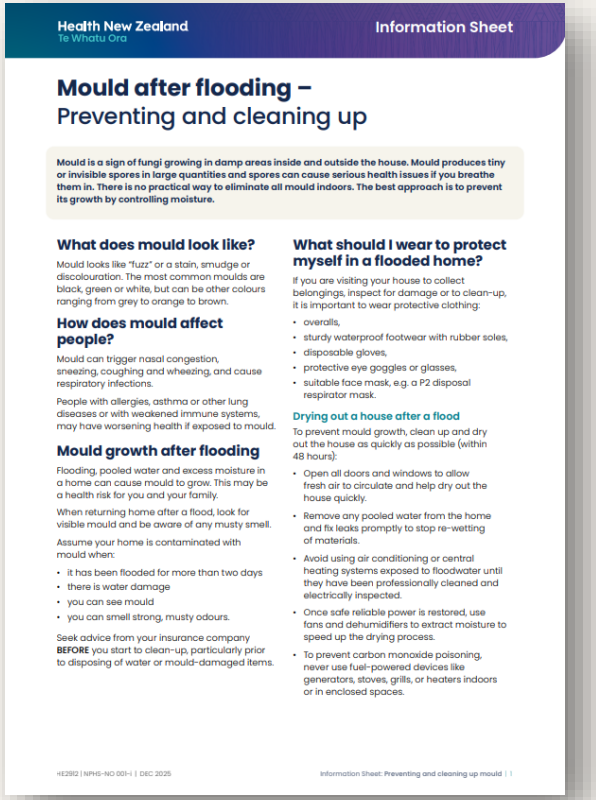
HE2967 | JAN 2026

Information Sheet: Taking care with silt from flooding

This resource is available from healthed.govt.nz or the Authorised Provider in your local health district

Flooding resources

Mould after flooding information sheet	
Description	Advice on preventing mould and staying safe while cleaning up
Resource type	Information sheet
Audience	People in areas affected by flooding
Language	English
Size	A4
File type	PDF
URL	healthed.govt.nz/collections/topic-disasters-and-emergencies/products/mould-after-flooding-preventing-and-cleaning-up-he2912



Health New Zealand
Te Whatu Ora

Information Sheet

Mould after flooding –
Preventing and cleaning up

Mould is a sign of fungi growing in damp areas inside and outside the house. Mould produces tiny or invisible spores in large quantities and spores can cause serious health issues if you breathe them in. There is no practical way to eliminate all mould indoors. The best approach is to prevent its growth by controlling moisture.

What does mould look like?

Mould looks like "fuzz" or a stain, smudge or discolouration. The most common moulds are black, green or white, but can be other colours ranging from grey to orange to brown.

How does mould affect people?

Mould can trigger nasal congestion, sneezing, coughing and wheezing, and cause respiratory infections.

People with allergies, asthma or other lung diseases or with weakened immune systems, may have worsening health if exposed to mould.

Mould growth after flooding

Flooding, pooled water and excess moisture in a home can cause mould to grow. This may be a health risk for you and your family.

When returning home after a flood, look for visible mould and be aware of any musty smell.

Assume your home is contaminated with mould when:

- it has been flooded for more than two days
- there is water damage
- you can see mould
- you can smell strong, musty odours.

Seek advice from your insurance company **BEFORE** you start to clean-up, particularly prior to disposing of water or mould-damaged items.

What should I wear to protect myself in a flooded home?

If you are visiting your house to collect belongings, inspect for damage or to clean-up, it is important to wear protective clothing:

- overalls,
- sturdy waterproof footwear with rubber soles,
- disposable gloves,
- protective eye goggles or glasses,
- suitable face mask, e.g. a P2 disposal respirator mask.

Drying out a house after a flood

To prevent mould growth, clean up and dry out the house as quickly as possible (within 48 hours):

- Open all doors and windows to allow fresh air to circulate and help dry out the house quickly.
- Remove any pooled water from the home and fix leaks promptly to stop re-wetting of materials.
- Avoid using air conditioning or central heating systems exposed to floodwater until they have been professionally cleaned and electrically inspected.
- Once safe reliable power is restored, use fans and dehumidifiers to extract moisture to speed up the drying process.
- To prevent carbon monoxide poisoning, never use fuel-powered devices like generators, stoves, grills, or heaters indoors or in enclosed spaces.

Flooding resources

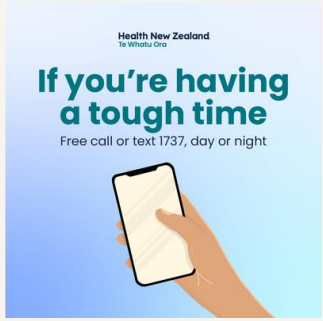
Leptospirosis flood information	
Description	Advice on avoiding leptospirosis after flooding
Resource type	Information sheet
Audience	People in areas affected by flooding
Language	English
Size	A4
File type	PDF
URL	healthed.govt.nz/collections/topic-disasters-and-emergencies/products/leptospirosis-flood-information-he2966



Flooding resources

Social media tiles	
Description	Social media tiles for use before, during and after a flood
Resource type	Social media tiles
Audience	People in areas affected by flooding
Language	English
Size	1080 x 1080px
File type	PNG
URLs	Available via the HealthEd El Niño collection: healthed.govt.nz/collections/topic-el-nino







For more information

healthnz.govt.nz/floods-and-health

Health advice on staying safe during and after flooding



Seeking health advice during an emergency and extreme weather

Care options for you and your whānau

If you do get sick there are many ways to access health advice, whatever the time of day or night. **In an emergency, call 111.**



Pharmacy

Your local pharmacy can give you advice on medicines and common health problems like coughs and colds. They can also recommend treatments, fill prescriptions, and some provide immunisations.



Healthline

Healthline is a free over-the-phone health service available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. You can call Healthline for free health advice from a Registered Nurse on **0800 611 116**.

You can also register for a call back at **healthnz.govt.nz/healthline**



Your usual hauora provider

Call your GP, hauora Māori or Pacific health provider to get support for you and your whānau from a doctor or nurse.



Telehealth

Phone or video GP appointment is a good option if you don't have a doctor or can't visit one in-person. Visit healthnz.govt.nz/OnlineGp

If you live in a rural area you can also call Ka Ora for an after-hours video and phone service. Call **0800 252 672** or visit **healthnz.govt.nz/kaora**

Accessing health services

Accessing health services in natural disasters information sheet	
Description	Advice on accessing health services in an emergency
Resource type	Information sheet
Audience	People in areas affected by natural disasters
Language	English
Size	A4
File type	PDF
URL	https://healthed.govt.nz/products/accessing-health-services-in-natural-disasters-he3300



Health New Zealand
Te Whatu Ora

Information Sheet

Accessing health services in natural disasters

During floods, earthquakes, fires, volcanic activity or other emergencies

Emergency – dial 111. If someone is seriously ill, injured or in immediate danger, **call 111.**

For urgent health advice contact your usual family doctor, pharmacist, Hauora or Pacific provider, if they are open and you can call.

Not an emergency? Call Healthline on 0800 611 116 (24 hours, 7 days) for free health advice from health professionals. This advice includes where and when to go for assessment and treatment if that is what you need. Healthline has interpreters and Māori clinicians available 8am–8pm.

Seeing a doctor

Call your GP or healthcare provider to make an appointment. An urgent appointment may be available if you explain what's wrong.

Not enrolled or can't see your regular provider? Visit a local urgent care centre. You do not need an appointment, but you might have to wait.

Find an urgent care centre at healthpoint.co.nz/gps-accident-urgent-medical-care/

Non-urgent care, online consultations are available 24/7, with subsidies for some people. Visit healthnz.govt.nz/online-phone-healthcare/online-gp-care

Healthline on 0800 611 116 can provide advice on your medication, or if you're away from your home, you can't access your doctor or you are not enrolled. Healthline advice is available for New Zealand citizens, residents and overseas visitors.

If power or internet outages prevent online booking, Healthline can help arrange appointments by phone.

Online consultation subsidies are available for:

- Children under 14 years
- Young people 14 to 17 years
- Community Services Card (CSC) holders.

Deaf, disabled people and their whānau can call the Disability Helpline 0800 11 12 13, text 8988 or use the NZ Relay service nzrelay.co.nz available 24/7.

Prescription Medication

If you evacuate, take your medication with you. Ask your pharmacist if your medication is okay to use if it is no longer kept chilled.

If you finish your medication or can't access it, contact your doctor to get a new prescription. If you cannot see a doctor, contact a pharmacy for advice. Pharmacists may provide up to a three-day emergency supply, although this may be expensive as there is not government funding for this.

Find a pharmacy at healthpoint.co.nz/pharmacy/

If the power goes out

Storing medication safely

- Keep refrigerated medication in a chilly bin or insulation bag with ice packs.
- Don't let the medication touch the ice or gel packs. Freezing can ruin some medicines, like insulin.
- If power is out for more than 3 days, contact your pharmacy or family doctor for advice about whether your medicines are safe to use or provide emergency supplies.

Powered Medical Equipment

If you have medical equipment that needs power to run, you should be registered with your electrical retailer as medically dependent on electricity. Your equipment provider does this. If you are not sure if you are registered, check with your equipment provider.

HE3300 | JULY 2026

Information Sheet: Accessing health services in natural disasters | 1

Health advice

Advice on seeking care

Care options information sheet	
Description	Advice on seeking care
Resource type	Information sheet
Audience	All audiences
Language	English, Samoan, Tongan
Size	A4
File type	PDF
URL	healthed.govt.nz/collections/product-group-care-options/products/care-options-for-you-and-your-whanau-english-he3334



Care options for you and your whānau

There are a range of healthcare options available if you can't see your regular GP. Many are available after hours and at weekends.

Healthline
0800 611 116

- Free over-the-phone health advice 24/7 from nurses and paramedics.
- Māori clinicians are available from 8am to 8pm weekdays.
- You can send photos or videos to help explain your symptoms.
- Option to ask Healthline to call you back.

Visit **healthnz.govt.nz/healthline**

Online doctor

- Online or over-the-phone appointment with a doctor any time, including after hours and weekends.
- **Free for children aged 13 and under.**
- Low-cost appointments for ages 14-17 and Community Services Card holders.

Find an online doctor at **healthnz.govt.nz/OnlineGP**

Pharmacy

- Advice on medications and minor concerns including colds, rashes and itchy skin.
- Many can also help with eye infections, urinary infections, emergency contraception, vaccinations and more.
- May be able to provide a few days of medication if you run out and need a new prescription.

Find a pharmacy at **healthpoint.co.nz**

After hours and urgent care clinics

- After hours or urgent care if your GP isn't available and you need to see someone in person.
- For urgent medical issues including breaks, sprains, bad cuts, head knocks, minor burns, eye and ear issues, and if you feel really sick.
- Free appointments for children and low-cost appointments for Community Services Card holders at some clinics.

Find your nearest urgent care clinic at **healthpoint.co.nz**

Visit **healthnz.govt.nz** for health advice and information on services.

Health New Zealand
Te Whatu Ora

08/26
This resource is available from healthed.govt.nz or your local Authorised Provider. HE3334



Mental wellbeing during emergencies and extreme weather

Wellbeing

Good wellbeing support can take many forms, and there is no ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ approach. It could be as simple as taking time to reconnect with family, looking out for and listening to others, talking to a friend, or doing something you enjoy.

There are a range of free and easily accessible tools and resources available for people needing support with their wellbeing or struggling with their mental health.

For advice on managing stress in an emergency:

- healthnz.govt.nz/managing-stress-in-an-emergency

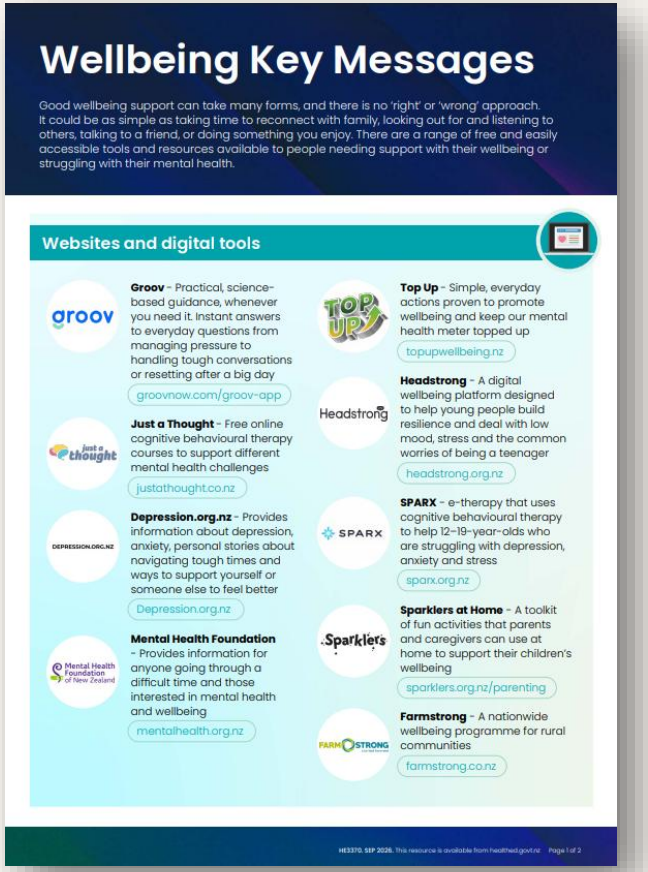
Need urgent help?

If you are seriously concerned about someone’s immediate safety:

- call 111 or take them to the Emergency Department at your nearest hospital
- contact your local mental health crisis assessment team healthnz.govt.nz/crisis-assessment-teams
- remain with them and help them to stay safe until support arrives.

Wellbeing resources

Wellbeing Key Messages	
Description	Wellbeing advice
Resource type	Information sheet
Audience	All audiences
Language	English
Size	A4
File type	PDF
URL	https://healthed.govt.nz/products/wellbeing-key-messages-english-he3370



Wellbeing Key Messages

Good wellbeing support can take many forms, and there is no 'right' or 'wrong' approach. It could be as simple as taking time to reconnect with family, looking out for and listening to others, talking to a friend, or doing something you enjoy. There are a range of free and easily accessible tools and resources available to people needing support with their wellbeing or struggling with their mental health.

Websites and digital tools

Groov - Practical, science-based guidance, whenever you need it. Instant answers to everyday questions from managing pressure to handling tough conversations or resetting after a big day
groovnow.com/groov-app

Just a Thought - Free online cognitive behavioural therapy courses to support different mental health challenges
justathought.co.nz

Depression.org.nz - Provides information about depression, anxiety, personal stories about navigating tough times and ways to support yourself or someone else to feel better
Depression.org.nz

Mental Health Foundation - Provides information for anyone going through a difficult time and those interested in mental health and wellbeing
mentalhealth.org.nz

Top Up - Simple, everyday actions proven to promote wellbeing and keep our mental health meter topped up
topupwellbeing.nz

Headstrong - A digital wellbeing platform designed to help young people build resilience and deal with low mood, stress and the common worries of being a teenager
headstrong.org.nz

SPARX - e-therapy that uses cognitive behavioural therapy to help 12–19-year-olds who are struggling with depression, anxiety and stress
sparx.org.nz

Sparklers at Home - A toolkit of fun activities that parents and caregivers can use at home to support their children's wellbeing
sparklers.org.nz/parenting

Farmstrong - A nationwide wellbeing programme for rural communities
farmstrong.co.nz

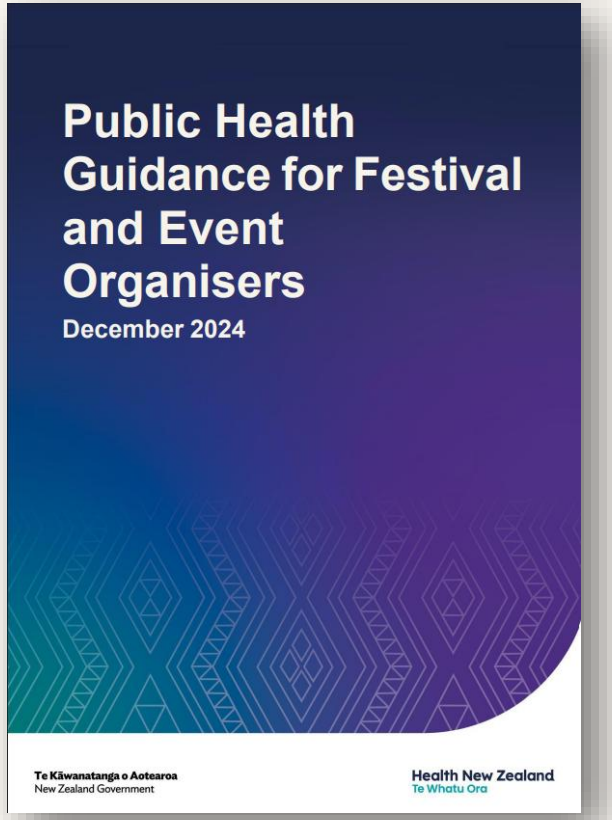
HE3370, SEP 2026. This resource is available from healthed.govt.nz Page 1 of 2



Event guidance

Event guidance resource

Public health guidance for event organisers	
Description	Guidance on holding safe events over summer months
Resource type	Public health guidance
Audience	Event organisers
Language	English
Size	A4
File type	PDF
URL	https://static.info.content.health.nz/docs/publications/Public-Health-Guidance-for-Festival-and-Event-Organisers_06.03.2025.pdf





Pests (mosquitoes and rodents)



How can pests affect our health?

- During El niño mosquito and rodent numbers may increase.
- Rats and mice can carry disease. Simple steps can be taken to control them.
- Mosquitoes are common here. They are more annoying than they are a health risk but mosquito bites can get infected.
- Exotic mosquitoes from overseas can carry infectious diseases.

How you get can get prepared:

- ✓ Control rodents by using baits and traps, removing food sources and reducing places rodents like to live.
- ✓ Avoid being bitten by mosquitoes.
- ✓ Remove mosquito breeding sites around your home.
- ✓ Find out about more about mosquitoes, rats, mice and other pests at: www.healthnz.govt.nz/insect-bites-and-pest-control

Mosquito bite advice

- Mosquito bites will usually go away on their own after a few days. Avoid scratching the area because this can make it worse.
- If you get a rash around the area of a bite or start to feel unwell call Healthline 0800 611 116 for free, expert health advice.

Mosquito resources

Keep your place mozzie free	
Description	Advice on removing mosquito breeding places around your home
Resource type	Information sheet
Audience	Anyone wanting to remove mosquito breeding places around their home
Language	English and te reo Māori
Size	A4
File type	PDF
URL	https://healthed.govt.nz/products/keep-your-place-mozzie-free-english-he9018-eng



Contacts

Key contact points

Public Health Emergency Management

phemt.spoc@tewhatuora.govt.nz

Public Health Emergency Management Public Information Manager

phem.PIM@tewhatuora.govt.nz

Regional NPHS Comms

- **Northern:** Nor-NPHSComms@tewhatuora.govt.nz
- **Te Manawa Taki:** TMT-NPHSCommunications@tewhatuora.govt.nz
- **Central | Te Ikaroa:** central.region.communications@tewhatuora.govt.nz
- **South Island | Te Waipounamu:** Karen.Berry@tewhatuora.govt.nz