



Looking after yourself in the wake of a flood

14 Feb 2020

Floods are a natural process and can be caused by several factors. Floods impact on individuals and communities, and have social, economic, and environmental consequences.

Flood consequences can be immediate or long-term and include:

- Individual impacts
 - Danger at the time, including injury and loss of lives
 - Anxiety, stress, and fear of re-flood
 - Impact on relationships with friends and family
 - Damage to property and possessions, including loss of sentimental possessions
 - Disruption and displacement of living conditions (with varying lengths)
 - Financial strain
- Community, business, economic, infrastructure, tourism, agriculture, and environmental impacts.

In addition to these primary consequences, individuals may also experience secondary impacts, due to ongoing stress when dealing with loss.

Ways to look after yourself

During a flood

- If there are any immediate dangers that may cause injury or death, call 000.
- Do NOT enter flood waters, on foot or within vehicles.
- Seek safety away from flood waters, and areas previously damaged by floods.
- Be aware of your surrounds, with floods impacting the environment including increased wildlife presence (i.e., snakes and mosquitos), fallen trees or powerlines, and damaged gas, water and electricity supplies.
- Depending on damage, do not enter properties until informed safe to do so.
- Be aware of your flood risk. Check local weather sources to keep up to date.
- Contact services for assistance with your practical needs and wellbeing.

When the clean up can begin:

- Cover up as much as possible with long clothing and enclosed footwear
- Wear rubber gloves and goggles
- Use repellent on exposed skin and reapply often

After a flood

- Seek safe food, water and shelter, away from flood water.
- Reach out to friends or family if you need to relocate or contact Department of Communities and Justice Housing (1800 422 322) for emergency disaster housing.
- Throw away food and water that has come into contact with flood waters.
- Use boiled or bottled water for drinking, cooking, and cleaning (including your teeth), and for pets' drinking water.
- Before re-entering your home, you must make sure that your home is safe to enter.

You may need to call an inspector, electrician, or plumber to determine whether the structure of your house is safe, as well as your water supply or electrical system. Check what steps are best with your insurer.

- For any non-life-threatening dangers (fallen trees or road blockages) contact the NSW State Emergency Services (132 500).
- Try to maintain positive self-care behaviours:
 - Quality sleep
 - Good nutrition and exercise
 - Maintain friendships and regular routines
 - Engage with your community, including assisting those in need and receiving assistance. Community responses can increase resilience and feelings of support.
 - Seek professional help when feeling distressed.

Be mindful of how you are responding. We all respond differently to trauma. It is common to experience the impacts long after the clean up

If you are:

- Feeling overwhelmed
- Using negative coping strategies (overconsumption or self-medicating)
- Experiencing
 - Panic attacks
 - Flash backs
 - Disturbed sleep
 - Lack of motivation
 - Unsettled or obsessive behaviour

Seek support.



Be mindful

- Contact your home and contents insurance company as soon as possible for advice on the clean-up and claims process. You may be advised to take photos and video footage to assist the claims process.
- Flood waters can become a breeding ground for mosquitos and other insects
- Floods can cause wildlife to relocate. Be cautious of snakes within your home.
- Excess water can cause mould to grow, which is harmful to your health.
- Working with your community can help you feel more supported and improve recovery and wellbeing.
- Gain strength from the collective actions of your community. You're most likely experiencing the same thing, and you might find the connection you feel is a positive outcome of the disaster.

Contacts

Disaster Welfare Assistance line:
1800 018 444

NSW Rural Assistance Authority:
1800 678 593

Agriculture and Animal Services Hotline:
1800 814 647

NSW State Emergency Services (SES):
132 500

Department of Communities and Justice Housing Contact Centre:
1800 422 322

Australian Government disaster recovery assistance hotline:
180 2266

Red Cross Inquiry Centre:
1800 727 077

NSW Mental Health Line:
1800 011 511

Lifeline:
13 11 14

Beyondblue:
1300 224 636

Healthy Minds:
1300 160 339

