

Floods – Traralgon

Key health information for community members

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OFFICIAL

Floods and your health

There are a lot of things to consider when returning home after a flood.

Skin contact with floodwater and mud from floodwater can cause illness and skin infections.

If you are injured or suffer a cut during your clean up; clean the wound and contact your doctor immediately.

Flooding can cause **sewage** to overflow inside your home.

Contact with sewage can make people sick, so contaminated areas must be cleaned and disinfected. And it is best to keep children and pets away until the area is cleaned up.

People's **private water supplies** may also be contaminated from floodwater, debris and chemicals.

If your water supply tastes, looks or smells unusual, do not use it for drinking, preparing food, and do not give it to animals.

Use bottled water. Boiling water will not make it safe to drink.

Flooding can also cause excessive **mould** growth which must be cleaned up before moving back to your home.

Some people are particularly vulnerable to mould:

- children (under 12 years, particularly babies)
- pregnant women
- people over 65 years of age
- and people with weakened immune systems, allergies, severe asthma or lung diseases.

These people should not be present when you clean up.

People should also be aware that wild **animals** like rodents, snakes or spiders may be trapped in your home, shed or garden.

If you get bitten or injured by an animal or insect again speak with your doctor.

Mosquitoes can also breed rapidly in stagnant waters. So drain any water from containers such as plant pots, tyres, buckets, and roof gutters to control mosquitos around your home.

Wastewater systems including septic tanks and their absorption area can be weakened by a flood, so do not drive or walk over them.

More information on septic tanks in flood-affected areas is available:

<https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/about/publications/policiesandguidelines/Septic-tanks-in-flood-affected-areas>

And **damaged gas or electricity supplies** need to be declared safe by a qualified electrician or plumber.

More information about coping without gas or electricity is available on the Better Health Channel website:

<https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/ServicesAndSupport/emergencies--coping-without-gas-or-electricity>

Food safety should also be considered and ALL food that has been flood damaged should be thrown away – including canned and packaged foods.

More information about food safety during power outages is available in English and a range of community languages: http://healthtranslations.vic.gov.au/bhcv2/bhcht.nsf/PresentDetail?Open&s=Power_outages:_food_safety_after_a_power_failure

Medicines, stored at home and affected by flood water may now be unsafe and extreme caution should be taken in trying to salvage any medicines.

More information about how to safely return home after a flood is available on the Better Health Channel

Translated flood safety factsheets:

Information on the following topics is available in English and a range of community languages on www.healthtranslations.vic.gov.au:

- [Animal and insect related hazards in flood affected areas](#)
- [Mould and your health](#)
- [Returning home safely after a flood](#)
- [Food safety after a power outage](#)
- [Using alternative fuel and generators safely during a power outage](#)

Financial assistance

Personal hardship assistance payments are available to people whose homes are damaged or destroyed and are uninhabitable. Visit emergency.vic.gov.au/relief/#financial_assistance

Family Violence

Emergencies can cause family violence – help is available

The Orange Door is the access point to services for adults, children and young people who are experiencing family violence. Visit orangedoor.vic.gov.au

Safe Steps Family Violence Response Centre provides confidential support for women and children living with family violence. Call 1800 015 188 or visit safesteps.org.au

The Men's Referral Service is a confidential telephone service for men who might be using violence towards a family member or who have been victimised by a partner or family member. Call 1300 766 491 or visit www.ntv.org.au.

Call Triple Zero (000) if you, or someone you know, is in immediate danger.

Personal well-being

There are a number support services available to assist you and your family recover from the strong emotional or physical reactions you may be experiencing.

If at any time you are worried about your mental health or the mental health of a loved one, call Lifeline 13 11 14.

Or contact:

- Your doctor or local community health centre
- A Counsellor or Psychologist
- Parentline Tel. 13 22 89 or the Kids Helpline Tel. 1800 55 1800
- NURSE-ON-CALL Tel. 1300 60 60 24 – for expert health information and advice (24 hours, 7 days)
- Australian Psychological Society Referral Service Tel. 1800 333 497

Insurance

If you have property or contents insurance you should contact your insurance company as soon as possible.

- Ask your insurer for advice on actions you should take
- Do not discard or throw away damaged items without first consulting your insurance company
- Make a list of items that have been damaged and take photographs if possible
- Keep receipts for any emergency repair work

For assistance with insurance contact the Insurance Council of Australia on **1800 734 621 (24-hour hotline)**. You can find information on lodging a claim following a disaster here: www.disasters.org.au.

For further details on insurance advice see <https://understandinsurance.com.au/recovering-from-a-disaster>.

COVID-19 and floods

If you are impacted by the recent storms, floods or power outages, you can always leave your home and travel more than 25 kms to stay safe.

If your home is without power you can stay with at a family member or friends house – no matter where they live. You can travel to get the supplies you need no matter how far.

If you have been affected by the recent storms and floods you can stay at a family member or friends house – no matter where they live. You can travel to get the supplies you need no matter how far.

Regardless of your location, continue to follow COVIDSafe principles, such as wearing a face mask, washing hands, coughing into a tissue or your elbow and maintaining appropriate physical distancing.

Life support and power failures

The Department of Health works with energy providers to ensure those customers dependent on power are checked on.

During a power outage people on life support who require access to power for medical reasons should enact their personal contingency plan.

People should speak to their doctor if they have any concerns, or call Triple Zero (000) in a life-threatening emergency.