



# INFECTION PREVENTION & YOU

## REMOVING WATER THAT DOESN'T BELONG

In May, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) recorded the wettest 12-month period on record for the United States. While additional rain may be helpful for lawns, it can also mean battling water where it doesn't belong, which is known as water intrusion. An example of water intrusion could be a plumbing leak, roof leak, or even water entering a basement. When faced with water intrusion, follow these tips to reduce your risk of coming in contact with harmful organisms (germs) that could cause an infection.

### Act early

If possible, find the source of the leak and repair it, remove water, and dry damp areas within 48-hours of the intrusion. Drying wet areas may help to reduce the chances that mold and fungi will develop. Mold and fungi can make you sick, especially if you have respiratory problems or allergies. Depending on how much water has to be removed, you may need to speak with a professional and use industrial fans or other special equipment.

### Stay safe

Wear gloves, mask, and eye protection.

- **Dealing with mold?** If more than 25 square feet of mold is present, contact a professional for removal. If less than 25 square feet of mold is present, and you decide to tackle the clean-up yourself, make sure you have the appropriate equipment. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) lists [how to clean and materials you'll need when dealing with mold](#). When disturbed, mold releases spores into the air, which you could breathe into your lungs and become sick.
- **Dealing with floodwater?** Standing, stagnant water is a health hazard for many reasons. Debris in the water can cut or puncture the skin, which could expose you to bacteria and could lead to tetanus. To protect yourself and loved ones from tetanus, stay up to date on your tetanus vaccine (make sure you have had a

shot within the past 10 years) and wear long-sleeved shirts and pants during clean-up. Another risk of standing water is mosquitoes. Be sure to use insect repellent when working near these areas.

### Keep it clean

Problem spots such as mechanical rooms, laundry rooms, and bathrooms should be checked often for mold. Disinfect these areas regularly with a 10 percent bleach solution to prevent mold or mildew from developing. For the best results, use a solution consisting of 1.25 to 1.5 cups of bleach for every one gallon of water. Remember, never mix ammonia and chlorine bleach, as this creates toxic fumes. For additional help recovering from significant water intrusion, contact a heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) professional for cleaning.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

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AIHA—Find an industrial hygienist: <https://www.aiha.org/about-ih/Pages/Find-an-Industrial-Hygienist.aspx>

CDC—Prevention and remediation strategies: [https://www.cdc.gov/mold/strats\\_fungal\\_growth.htm](https://www.cdc.gov/mold/strats_fungal_growth.htm)

FEMA—Dealing with mold & mildew in your flood-damaged home: [https://www.fema.gov/pdf/rebuild/recover/fema\\_mold\\_brochure\\_english.pdf](https://www.fema.gov/pdf/rebuild/recover/fema_mold_brochure_english.pdf)



**ABOUT APIC** The mission of the Association for Professionals in Infection Control and Epidemiology, Inc., (APIC) is to create a safer world through prevention of infection. The association's more than 15,800 members direct infection prevention programs that save lives and improve the bottom line for hospitals and other healthcare facilities. APIC advances its mission by pursuing the strategic goals of patient safety, implementation science, competencies and certification, advocacy, and data standardization. Visit APIC online at [www.apic.org](http://www.apic.org)

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