

# 10 Tips for Keeping Children Safe in a FLOOD



**Get Ready. Get Safe.**

Floods are among the most frequent and costly natural disasters in the United States. As much as 90 percent of all damage from natural disasters is caused by floods. Flooding typically occurs after heavy or prolonged rainfall, or the rapid-melt of snow. While the effects of floods can be devastating, there are simple steps families can take to keep their children safe.

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## PREPARE:

1. **Talk about floods.** Spend time with your family discussing why floods occur. Explain that flooding is a natural event and not anyone's fault. Use simple words that even young children can understand.
2. **Consider flood insurance.** Standard homeowners insurance doesn't cover flood damage. For information on flood insurance visit [www.FloodSmart.gov](http://www.FloodSmart.gov)
3. **Stay informed.** Use a NOAA Weather Radio or listen to a local station on a portable, battery-powered radio or television. Listen for and respond to flood watches and warnings. Evacuate if told to do so or if you feel unsafe.

## DURING FLOODS:

4. **Follow guidance of local authorities.** Local authorities, such as elected officials and first responders, are most informed about affected areas and most knowledgeable which flooded areas to avoid.
5. **Move to higher ground.** During a flood you should move to higher ground and avoid standing, flowing, or rising water.
6. **Keep children away from dirty water.** Keep children and pets away from hazardous sites and floodwater as it's likely to be dirty, carry bacteria, and vulnerable to electric shock.
7. **Keep children clean.** Wash children's hands frequently (always before meals) and ensure they bathe after being exposed to flood waters or flood-damaged areas.

## AFTER FLOODS:

8. **Ensure utilities are restored.** Before children return to flood-affected areas, ensure utilities such as electricity and plumbing are restored and living and learning spaces (e.g., homes, schools, child care facilities) are free from physical and environmental hazards.
9. **Limit children's participation in recovery.** Children and teens should not be involved in clean-up efforts but should return after the area is cleaned up. Before children return, these areas should be cleaned and disinfected, along with all toys, clothing, etc.
10. **Clean or discard contaminated toys.** Do not allow children to play with toys that have been contaminated by flood water and have not been disinfected. Materials that cannot be readily disinfected, such as stuffed animals or pillows, should be discarded.

Flood weather terms: Be familiar with the following definitions to help prepare your family for floods.

- **Flood WATCH** means a flood is possible in your area.
- **Flood WARNING** means flooding is already occurring or will occur soon in your area.
- **Flash Flood WATCH** means flash flooding is possible in your area.
- **Flash Flood WARNING** means a flash flood is occurring or will occur very soon.

Watches and warnings are issued by the National Weather Service (NWS) and broadcast on NOAA Weather Radio and on local radio and television stations.

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**Additional Resources:** The tips above are just the start of knowing how to prepare for and respond to floods. Use the following resources to help ensure your family is ready for the next flood.

For adults:

- American Academy of Pediatrics: Flash Floods/ Flood Recovery. <http://www.aap.org/en-us/advocacy-and-policy/aap-health-initiatives/Children-and-Disasters/Documents/Hurricanes-ReturnofChildren.pdf>
- American Red Cross: Flood Safety. <http://www.redcross.org/prepare/disaster/flood>
- National Flood Insurance Program: Flood Outreach Toolkit. <http://www.floodsmart.gov/toolkits/flood/index.htm>

For children:

- Department of Homeland Security. Ready Kids: Floods. <http://www.ready.gov/kids/know-the-facts/floods>