

SEWAGE BACKUP FACTSHEET

This has been prepared by legacy HKPR DHU

Immediate Actions After a Sewage Backup

- **Stop using your plumbing** until the issue is inspected and resolved.
- **Avoid contact with sewage floodwater**, especially near electrical outlets or wiring.
- **Turn off power at the breaker box** if there is standing water or a risk of electrical wires getting wet. If unsure, seek assistance from your electrical utility provider.
- **If you have a private sewage system**, contact a licensed professional to investigate the cause of the backup. Your local municipal building department may also provide guidance.
- **If connected to a municipal sewer system**, reach out to your local Public Works department to request an inspection. If the issue is within your home's plumbing, you may need to hire a licensed plumber.
- **Tenants should inform their landlord** immediately.
- **Review your insurance policy** to check for sewer backup coverage.

Health & Safety Precautions Before Cleaning

- **Vulnerable individuals (children, pregnant women, and those with respiratory conditions)** should not handle sewage or contaminated materials.
- **Wear protective gear** (rubber gloves, boots, a face mask, and eye protection) before handling sewage-contaminated items.
- **Wash hands thoroughly** with soap and potable water after cleanup or handling contaminated objects. If potable water is unavailable, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer (70-90% alcohol) with a valid Natural Product Number (NPN).
- **Seek medical attention immediately** if you develop diarrhea, vomiting, or fever after sewage exposure.
- **Clean and disinfect any open cuts or wounds** that come into contact with sewage water. Seek medical attention if necessary.
- **Dispose of any food or beverages** that have been exposed to sewage, including refrigerated and frozen items, bottled drinks, and canned or jarred products. If unsure, discard the item.
- **Do not use a private well** that may have been contaminated by sewage. Instead, use bottled water or water from an approved source. Have the well tested for bacteria before resuming use.



Cleaning Up After a Sewage Backup

- **Dry out the affected area** by opening windows and doors and using fans or dehumidifiers to prevent mould growth.
- **Assume all sewage-exposed materials are contaminated** and must either be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected or discarded. Items that cannot be effectively cleaned and dried should be replaced.
- **Discard porous and non-washable contaminated items**, including mattresses, carpets, padding, upholstered furniture, stuffed animals, cosmetics, baby toys, pillows, wooden cutting boards, baby bottle nipples, pacifiers, foam-rubber items, books, and wallpaper.
- **Wash and disinfect hard surfaces and non-porous items**, such as flooring, sealed wood or drywall, concrete, molding, plastic and metal furniture, countertops, appliances, sinks, children's toys, and plumbing fixtures. Use a mixture of potable water and soap for cleaning, followed by a bleach solution for disinfection.
- **Rinse disinfected children's toys** with potable water before reuse.
- **Professional help may be needed** to remove carpets, drywall, or insulation damaged by sewage or prolonged moisture exposure.
- **Remove and discard drywall and water damaged insulation** that has been exposed to high humidity or standing water for an extended time. If mold persists, consult a professional.

Preparing and Using a Bleach Disinfection Solution

- Use **undiluted household bleach (5.25%)** to prepare a disinfecting solution (5,000 PPM).
- **Mix 100ml (20 teaspoons) of bleach into 1L (4 cups) of water.**
- **Always add bleach to water** (not the other way around) to prevent splashing and fumes.
- **Ensure the solution remains on the surface for at least 10 minutes** for effective disinfection.
- **Do not mix bleach with ammonia** or other household cleaners, as this creates toxic fumes.
- **Ventilate the area well** by using fans or opening windows and doors while cleaning.
- **Prepare a fresh bleach solution daily**, if needed, as its effectiveness diminishes over time.
- **Concentrated bleach solutions** should not be disposed of into a septic tank.

Resources

- [Government of Canada: Addressing Moisture and Mould in Your Home](#)
- [Government of Canada: After a flood](#)
- Institute for Catastrophic Loss Reduction: [Handbook for Reducing Basement Flooding](#)
- [Infection Prevention Tips for Flood and Hurricane Season, Association for Professionals in Infection Control and Epidemiology](#)
- [Ontario Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks – Septic Systems](#)