

Recreational Water Safety After a Flood

While rivers and lakes can have hazards and contamination under normal conditions, severe storms and flooding can increase the risk of getting hurt, sick, or drowning at these bodies of water.

Stay out of any body of water for at least 48 hours following heavy rains, and longer if it has flooded.

Rainstorms and Floods Create Hazards

- Swollen rivers and fast-moving currents can create dangerous conditions at swimming holes and rivers for days after a heavy rain event.
- Severe rains may bring bacteria or microorganisms that can make you sick into the water from overwhelmed wastewater systems and runoff.
- Sharp objects, like glass or metal fragments, and spilled fuel or chemicals can also be carried into swimming areas by stormwater runoff and flooding.

Stay Out to Stay Safe

- **Stay out of rivers and streams until the water is clear and calm** – usually several days after a storm. Watch the currents and listen for the sound of unusually loud rushing water. Natural waters can have hidden dangers below the surface, like formations that create suction.
- **After heavy rains**, stay out of any body of water for at least 48 hours to avoid the risk of getting sick from contaminated water. In a public swim area, you can swim if the water has been tested and it's safe.
- **After a flooding event**, it may take several days before water is safe for swimming and recreation.

What to Know Before You Swim

- Check with the park manager or town to see if the swim areas are open and whether they have tested the water quality.
- Look for and obey any posted signs at beaches and parks.
- Never swim alone. Water is stronger than you think, and accidents can take only an instant.
- [Watch for cyanobacteria](#) in the water, since extra nutrients from the floodwater may cause blooms. They can make the water appear dark green, and look like pea soup or spilled paint.
- Don't swallow beach water or swim with open wounds that can get infected.
- Shower after swimming, and wash your hands before eating.