

Disinfecting Dishes, Cookware and Utensils

SAFETY GUIDELINES AFTER A DISASTER

During a disaster such as a flood, tornado or fire, kitchen items easily can become contaminated. Floodwaters may contain silt, raw sewage, oil or chemical wastes, while fires may leave residues from toxic fumes or fire-fighting chemicals. Before using any item that has come in contact with these substances, follow the guidelines at right.

DISASSEMBLE, WASH AND DISINFECT

Take apart any item that can be cleaned in pieces. If possible, remove handles from pots. If you have a dishwasher and the hot water temperature is at least 140 degrees F., use a long wash cycle and heated drying cycle to clean and disinfect dishwasher-safe items. Regarding other items, or all items if you don't have a dishwasher, follow these steps:

- ◆ Wash all items in a strong detergent solution. Use a brush to remove dirt. Rinse in hot water.
- ◆ Immerse glass, porcelain, china, plastic dinnerware and enamelware for 10 minutes in a disinfecting solution of 2 tablespoons of chlorine bleach per gallon of hot water.
- ◆ Disinfect silverware, metal utensils, and pots and pans by boiling in water for 10 minutes. Chlorine bleach should not be used in this case because it reacts with many metals and causes them to darken.
- ◆ Air-dry dishes. Do not use a towel.
- ◆ Discard and replace soft, porous plastic or wood items saturated by floodwater, since they cannot be sanitized. These include baby bottles, nipples and pacifiers.
- ◆ If cupboards and counters come in contact with floodwater, clean and rinse them with a chlorine bleach solution before storing dishes.

Additional resources:

Your county family living agent, the American Red Cross, the Federal Emergency Management Agency

Related publications:

"Repairing Your Flooded Home," American Red Cross/Federal Emergency Management Agency, 1992.