

Floods - animal and insect hazards

Community information

When returning to a flood-affected area, wild animals, including rodents, snakes or spiders, may be trapped in your home, shed or garden.

General tips

- Do not approach wild or stray animals. For advice about dealing with animals contact your local council, animal shelter or vet.
- Store away all food to avoid attracting rats and mice (for example, store food in containers with secure lids).
- Watch out for snakes.
- Mosquitoes can breed rapidly in stagnant waters and become a nuisance. Take precautions to control mosquitos around your home.
- Remove pets and other animals that have died as soon as possible. For advice on safe disposal speak to your local council or vet.

Dealing with snakes

Snakes can lose their home during a flood. As a result, they may look for shelter and food inside houses, storage sheds and other buildings. Damaged structures and debris are more accessible to snakes.

When outdoors:

- Wear sturdy work boots, gloves, and long pants to protect your legs.
- Watch where you put your hands and feet when removing or cleaning up debris.
- If you see a snake, step back from it slowly and allow it to proceed on its way. Do not touch it.
- Remove debris from around your home as soon as possible because it can attract rodents, lizards and insects which snakes feed on.
- Be aware of snakes that may be swimming in the water trying to get to higher ground.

When indoors:

- If you find a snake in your house, do not panic.
- Seek advice from someone who knows how to safely remove the snake. Call the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning on 136 186 for a list of snake catchers in your area.

If you are bitten by a snake:

- Do not wash the skin around the bite.
- Keep still and calm and get medical help quickly by calling triple zero (000).
- If you cannot get to a hospital right away, apply first aid – lie down or sit with the bite below the level of your heart. Cover the bite with a clean, dry dressing or bandage and, if possible, splint the limb.
- Note the time of the bite and when the bandage was put on.
- Do not apply a tourniquet, cut the bite to release the venom or try to suck the venom out of the wound.

Spiders

If you are bitten by a redback spider:

- Wash the affected area well and soothe the pain with ice packs or clean iced water.
- Do not apply pressure on redback spider bites as it often worsens the pain.
- Seek immediate medical help.

For other spider bites:

- Wash the area with soap and water.
- Apply a cold pack if the bite is painful.
- For most spider bites, no other first aid is necessary.
- Contact your doctor if symptoms develop or persist.

Discourage rodents

- Rodents (such as mice and rats) carry diseases and are a nuisance.
- Remove food and items that can provide shelter for rodents.
- Wash dishes and cooking utensils immediately after use.
- Get rid of garbage and debris as soon as possible by placing it into a rubbish bin with a lid prior to collection and disposal.
- Lay rodent baits or traps in dry areas. Follow the label directions and keep out of reach of children and animals.

Avoid mosquito bites

- Rain and flooding may lead to a substantial increase in mosquito numbers as water subsides and pools form.
- In Victoria, mosquitoes can carry diseases that may be passed on to people through mosquito bites. This includes diseases such as Ross River virus, Barmah Forest virus, and on rare occasions Murray Valley Encephalitis virus or Kunjin virus.

Things to do to avoid mosquito bites:

- Cover up as much as possible. Wear long, loose-fitting, light coloured clothing including socks and covered shoes.
- Use an effective mosquito repellent containing picaridin or DEET (or N,N-diethyl-m-toluamide) on all exposed skin.

- Prevent mosquitoes from breeding around your home. Drain away water left standing outdoors in open containers such as flowerpots, tyres or buckets. Change pets water bowl regularly.
- Prevent mosquitoes from getting inside by using fly screens on windows, doors and vents.
- Use mosquito coils, 'knockdown' sprays, or plug in "zapper" vaporisers in small, outdoor areas.

Flies

- Flies carry diseases and are a nuisance.
- If food and garbage build up this becomes a breeding ground for flies.
- Clean up food waste as soon as possible by placing it into a rubbish bin with a lid prior to collection and disposal.

Further information

- If bitten by a snake get immediate medical attention by calling triple zero (000).
- If bitten or injured by an animal or stung by insect seek advice from your doctor or call NURSE-ON-CALL 24 hours a day, 7 days a week on 1300 60 60 24.
- The Victorian Poisons Information Centre provides advice 24 hours a day, 7 days a week on 13 11 26.
- For a list of snake catchers in your area contact the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning Customer Information Centre on 136 186.
- Information on bites and stings, spiders and mosquitoes go to the [Better Health Channel](http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au) <www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au>

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To receive this document in another format, phone 1300 761 8734, using the National Relay Service 13 36 77 if required, or [email](mailto:environmental.healthunit@dhhs.vic.gov.au) the Environment Section at <environmental.healthunit@dhhs.vic.gov.au>.

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