

MEDIA RELEASE

For immediate release

FLOODS AND HEALTH RISKS

Advice from Montréal's Director of Public Health to Return Home Safely

Montréal, 15 May 2017. Over the next few days, hundreds of flood victims in the Montréal area will be returning to their homes. The Director of Public Health, Dr. Richard Massé, would like to remind everyone to be on the alert for the risks and dangers related to electricity, contaminated water and carbon monoxide. He also wants to emphasize the importance of dealing with risks of mould quickly and safely in homes that were flooded. "Public health representatives will attend information sessions organized by the boroughs and will be available to answer flood victims' questions," says Dr. Massé.

Electricity

To avoid risks of electrocution, it is recommended to wait until authorities give the go-ahead to move back into your home. Have your electrical system inspected by a master electrician before turning it back on. For more information, [go to Returning Home](#).

Carbon monoxide

To avoid risks of carbon monoxide poisoning, generators, pumps and other appliances that run on gasoline or propane should be installed outdoors, at least 3 metres from doors and windows. Get a battery-operated carbon monoxide detector. Carbon monoxide is an odourless, colourless gas that can be deadly. For more information, [go to Returning Home](#).

Tap water

On the island of Montréal, water from the water system is drinkable. Tap water that comes from a well is considered undrinkable. In this case, bring water to a rolling boil for one minute before drinking it. If the water is not clear or has an odd smell, don't risk it. Use bottled water. Drinking contaminated water can cause gastroenteritis and more serious health problems. For more information: [Public health department notice to flood victims](#).

Flood water

Flood water is contaminated: Avoid coming in direct contact with it or with objects that have been exposed to this water. If you do, you may develop skin irritations or infections as well as gastroenteritis.

Always wear rubber gloves, rubber boots and protective glasses around flood water and when handling contaminated objects. Inside your home, use an N95 protective mask. N95 masks are sold in hardware stores and pharmacies. For more information, [go to Cleaning Up Outdoors: Recommendations for workers, residents and volunteers, Cleaning your home after a flood: Correct use of a protective mask.](#)

Mould

Mould grows on all porous surfaces (wood, drywall, fabric, rugs and carpets, sofas, mattresses, etc.) that have been in contact with water for more than 48 hours. It is important to quickly remove these materials to prevent mould from spreading. If there is visible or potential mould, hire a decontamination specialist. Moulds release irritants and allergens that can cause allergies and respiratory problems. [See Returning Home](#) and [Cleaning your home after a flood: Correct use of a protective mask.](#)

Tetanus

Cutting yourself with a contaminated object or having a wound that comes into contact with contaminated water or soil increases the risk for tetanus. Check to ensure that your tetanus vaccination is up to date; the recommendation is to get a dose every 10 years. To get a booster shot, contact your local CLSC.

In Case of Injury

- Immediately clean all wounds, even minor ones, with soap and clean water.
- Cover wounds with airtight bandages.
- **For serious wounds or animal bites that have broken the skin, call Info-Santé at 8-1-1 or go to a clinic near you.**

For additional information:

santemontreal.qc.ca, urgencequebec.gouv.qc.ca, ville.montreal.qc.ca

Source: Direction régionale de santé publique, CIUSSS du Centre-Sud-de-l'Île-de-Montréal

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