

INSTRUCTIONS FOR PREVENTING HEALTH RISKS WHEN RETURNING TO YOUR HOME AFTER A FLOOD

The Public Health Department (DSPU) of the Integrated Health and Social Services Center (CISSS) of Outaouais would like to remind residents of the precautions they should take when returning to a flooded home.



TO AVOID THE RISK OF ELECTROCUTION:

Once the water has been removed, contact Hydro-Québec (1 800 790-2424) and have your electrical system checked by a professional electrician.



TO AVOID CARBON MONOXIDE POISONING:

- If you are still out of gas or electricity and you plan to use fuel-burning equipment (equipment that uses propane, wood, fuel, oil, gas or natural gas), use a battery-operated carbon monoxide detector.
- Fuel-burning equipment designed to be used outdoors (pumps, generators, barbecues or other heating and cooking equipment) should never be used indoors and must be placed outdoors, away from doors and windows.

Carbon monoxide is a toxic gas that is odourless and colourless. Poisoning can happen in just a few minutes. If you feel the symptoms (dizziness, headache, nausea, vomiting and fatigue) or if a detector goes off : leave the house immediately, call 9-1-1, leave the door open when you leave and do not go back in until a firefighter gives you the authorization to do so.



TO AVOID ILLNESSES DUE TO WATER CONSUMPTION:

- If your water comes from a municipal drinking water distribution system, it is clean to drink, unless you have been told otherwise. It is safe to drink and use as you normally would.
- If your water comes from a **private well**, you should consider it to be **non-potable**. Follow these instructions:
 - If the water looks normal, boil it for at least 1 minute at a rolling boil before drinking, preparing food (including baby bottle preparation) and brushing your teeth. Bottled water is also a good option.
 - If the water is cloudy, if it has an unusual smell, or if you suspect chemical contamination, do not boil it; use bottled water.
 - Wait a minimum of 10 days after the flood waters have receded before disinfecting your well and having your water tested. You must continue to boil your water or use bottled water until testing indicates that your well water meets the accepted quality standards.
 - For more information about well disinfection and testing, refer to the document "In the event of a flood" on the Urgence Québec website: <https://www.urgencequebec.gouv.qc.ca/En/Pages/default.aspx>.



TO AVOID RISKS ASSOCIATED WITH POTENTIALLY CONTAMINATED MEDICATIONS:

- Do not take any medications that have come in contact with flood water or that were left in the refrigerator after an extended power outage; return them to the pharmacy.

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TO AVOID FOOD POISONING:

- Discard all food that has come in contact with flood water, including damaged cans.
- After a power outage of more than 6 hours, discard the perishable foods in the refrigerator. Beyond 48 hours, discard the food in the freezer. If you have any doubts regarding what to throw out and what to keep, refer to the document “In the event of a flood” on the Urgence Québec website: <https://www.urgencequebec.gouv.qc.ca/En/Pages/default.aspx>.



TO AVOID HEALTH PROBLEMS ASSOCIATED WITH CLEANING UP A FLOODED HOME:

- Keep rooms ventilated
- Keep children away during the clean-up.
- Wear appropriate protective equipment (mask, rubber gloves and boots, long clothing and protective glasses) in order to avoid all contact with dirty water.
- If you suffer from asthma, it is strongly recommended that you do not clean-up yourself.



TO AVOID HEALTH PROBLEMS ASSOCIATED WITH INDOOR AIR QUALITY FOLLOWING A FLOOD:

Due to excessive moisture, mold growth can occur inside the home and may cause health problem, such as worsening some asthma symptoms. The following measures can help to prevent mold growth.

The moment you return to your home:

- Open the windows and doors to aerate the rooms and lower the humidity levels to less than 50% (you can monitor the humidity levels in your home using a hygrometer which can be purchased at little cost from a hardware store).
- Discard all porous materials that have been in contact with flood water, such as rugs, insulation, drywall, and any articles that cannot be properly cleaned or for which the stuffing has gotten wet (mattresses, pillows, cushions, plush toys, etc.).
- Using an all-purpose cleaner and hot water, wash all non-porous surfaces and objects (metal, glass, etc.) that may have come in contact with dirty water. Rinse, then dry them. Pay special attention to objects that come in contact with the mouth (such as children’s toys).

The use of bleach is not recommended; it is corrosive and can cause toxic gases. If you still insist on using bleach, follow this recipe: 5 ml (1 tsp) of bleach for every 1 litre of water. **Never mix bleach with other cleaning products such as ammonia-based cleaners or acids like vinegar.**



If you have a non-urgent health problem, call Info-Santé (8-1-1 or 1-866-567-4036) or consult your physician.