

WHAT SHOULD YOU DO AFTER A FLOOD?

For residents whose homes have been flooded
INSTRUCTIONS TO REDUCE HEALTH AND SAFETY RISKS



If you have been evacuated:

- Wait for the authorities to give you the green light before returning home.
- Follow the safety guidelines that were given to you.



Electricity

Water and electricity combined can cause electrocution.

- Consult a master electrician before:
 - returning home;
 - switching the power back on;
 - using any electrical or heating devices that have come into contact with water.



Combustion appliances

Power washers, generators or other appliances that run with gas or fuels may release carbon monoxide which can cause severe or fatal intoxication.

- Never use these devices inside your home.
- Purchase battery-powered carbon monoxide detectors.
- Should you notice any symptoms (e.g., headache, dizziness, fatigue, nausea) OR if the alarm rings:
 - Leave your home right away and dial 9-1-1.
 - Do not return home until firefighters or an expert have advised that it is safe.



During power outages, never use auxiliary heaters, cooking devices, camping devices or barbecues inside your home.



Drinking water

Your drinking water might have been contaminated with microbes by the flood and might cause gastroenteritis.

If the source of your drinking water is:

- A public water supply system:
 - Follow your municipality's or supplier's instructions.
- Your well:
 - Consider your water unsafe for consumption until proven otherwise.
 - For drinking, preparing foods or brushing your teeth:
 - Use bottled water or water from a public water supply system OR
 - Boil tap water for at least 1 minute before using it.
 - If the water is murky or has an unusual smell:
 - Do not drink that water! Use bottled water instead.
 - Consult the ministère du Développement durable, de l'Environnement et de la Lutte contre les changements climatiques to learn how to:
 - Decontaminate your well.
 - Have your water tested before using it for consumption.



Food, medications, dishware

Food, medications, dishware and utensils may have been contaminated and cause food poisoning or gastroenteritis.

Food and medications

- Throw away any food or medications which have come into contact with floodwater.
- If there has been a power outage, consult the factsheet "*Quoi garder et quoi jeter*" and the « *Thermoguide* » from the ministère de l'Agriculture, des Pêcheries et de l'Alimentation du Québec.

Dishware, utensils and kitchen countertops

- Wash first with warm, soapy water, and then rinse. Dishware and utensils can be washed in the dishwasher.
- Disinfect with a solution of bleach and water (4 teaspoons (20 ml) of 5 % bleach for 4 litres / 1 gallon of clean clear water). Allow to air dry. Do not rinse.
- If there was a sewer backup, disinfect with a solution of bleach and water (3 tablespoons (45 ml) of 5 % bleach for 4 litres/1 gallon of clean clear water). Allow to air dry. Do not rinse.

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Cleaning objects and surfaces

Floodwater may contain microbes or chemical products, contaminate objects and surfaces, and cause infections or skin irritations as well as gastroenteritis.

- Wear gloves when handling or cleaning contaminated objects. Wash your hands frequently.
- Wear protective gear (i.e., boots, mask), depending on circumstances.
- Clean surfaces and objects with an all-purpose detergent.

In the case of a sewer backup:

- First clean all surfaces with warm, soapy water and dry.
- Disinfect with a solution of water and bleach (3 tablespoons (45ml) of 5 % bleach for 4 litres/1 gallon of clean water) and then air dry. Do not rinse.



Caution!

- Always properly ventilate the area where you are cleaning.
- Beware of bleach:
 - it is corrosive.
 - it may release toxic fumes.
 - Do not combine bleach with an ammonia-based detergent or with an acidic substance (e.g., vinegar) or any other type of disinfectant.
- Beware of the risk of hypothermia if you get wet and you remain in a cold place.
- Beware of accidents due to material, waste, debris left by the flood, etc.

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Mould

To prevent mould

Stagnant water, soiled or damp materials and humidity are good growing conditions for mould, which can cause or aggravate existing health problems (e.g., asthma).

- Remove water and discard any porous and wet items that cannot be thoroughly cleaned and dried (e.g., mattress, carpet, upholstered furniture, pressed wood).
- Remove the wet or humid drywall and mineral wool from affected walls up to 50 cm/20 inches above the flood water line.
- Ventilate, heat, and dehumidify to obtain a humidity level between 30 % and 50 %.
- Check for any **signs of mould** to quickly take all necessary remedial actions:
 - Odour of dampness, must, soil or alcohol.
 - Coloured or blackish stains covering the surface of materials.
 - Humidity rings, blistering or peeling paint.

To eliminate mould

If, despite all your efforts, mould appears, it can cause or aggravate health problems. So it is important to :

- Identify all sources of mould and eliminate them.
- If the moulds cover a broad surface area or if major work is required, contact a qualified professional as specific precautions need to be taken.
- Wear gloves when manipulating objects or materials covered with mould.
- Throw away any mouldy porous materials, even if they are not damp (drywall, sound-proofing ceiling tiles, upholstery, etc.).
- Clean hard surfaces affected by mould (e.g., floor, ceramic, wooden furniture, etc.) using a cleaning solution of water and all-purpose detergent.
- Rinse and dry rapidly.



Stress and anxiety

Any flood can cause a lot of stress, anxiety and worries.

- Call Info-Santé at 8-1-1 if you need help.

For further information, consult the Service Québec factsheet entitled [Return to your home](#).