

MEDIA RELEASE

For immediate release

Montréal’s Director of Public Health presents findings from the health survey flood victims

Montréal, 6 June 2017 – Dr. Richard Massé, Montréal’s Director of Public Health, released the highlights of a health survey conducted among victims of the recent floods in Montréal. “Our survey shows that almost 70% of respondents reported having suffered from anxiety, sleep disturbances or concentration problems since the floods,” said Dr. Massé. He would like to remind flood victims that they can still get help from the health services set up following the floods and that Info-Santé 8-1-1 is also a good source.

Methodology

From 17 to 25 May, nearly 200 households answered a questionnaire administered during door-to-door visits by the CIUSSS du Centre-Sud-de-l’Île-de-Montréal public health teams. The sample is representative of Montréal flood victims as a whole: 20% from Cartierville, 35% from Île Bizard and 45% from Pierrefonds. Moreover, 21% of respondents lived in residences rated code red by Montréal’s fire department (cannot return home due to health and safety concerns); 30% received a code yellow rating (can return to their homes but must comply with certain health and safety regulations); 36% were rated code green (safe to return home); and 13% had not been rated at the time public health officials visited them.

Almost 70% of respondents reported mental health problems

The survey revealed that proportionately, flood victims were five times more likely to report fair to poor mental health than Montrealers in general—24% vs. 5%. Close to 7 in 10 people (67%) reported suffering from anxiety, sleep disturbances or concentration problems. This figure climbs to 74% among flood evacuees. “Flood victims’ financial concerns can increase anxiety problems; indeed, the survey showed that 75% of respondents did not have flood insurance. The number is 80% among evacuees,” added Dr. Massé.

Physical health problems affecting 35% of households

Respondents were also proportionately more likely to perceive their health to be fair to poor, compared with Montrealers in general—20% vs. 12%. One in three households (35%) reported developing physical health problems since the floods. Over half of those problems were related to respiratory health, and included symptoms such as cough, irritation or difficulty breathing. “Mould grows quickly after a flood and can cause or aggravate respiratory problems. Therefore, it’s very important to carry out the work needed to avoid being exposed to mould,” said Dr. Massé. This finding is especially worrisome since nearly half of respondents consider they don’t have the physical or financial capacity to proceed with the clean-up.

Support for flood victims

Several programs and services have been put in place to help flood victims:

- Special financial assistance program for flood victims 1-888-643-AIDE (2433) or urgencequebec.gouv.qc.ca
- Returning home and cleaning up: urgencequebec.gouv.qc.ca and santemontreal.qc.ca
- Health and psychosocial services: 8-1-1 or santemontreal.qc.ca

Full survey report

The full health survey report will be available soon. A second data collection will be carried out in a few months to track the health of flood victims and inform our partners of the results so they can adapt the services they offer to the needs of this population.

Prevention Now = A Healthy Future

The Direction régionale de santé publique du CIUSSS du Centre-Sud-de-l'Île-de-Montréal serves the entire region of Montréal. Public health works to improve and safeguard population health, including in emergency situations. For more information: dsp.santemontreal.qc.ca or [@Santepub_Mtl](https://twitter.com/Santepub_Mtl).

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