

Precautions to be taken following a flood or sewer backup:

In order to avoid food poisoning, it is important to:

- discard contaminated or foods exposed to inadequate temperatures;
- clean and sanitize contaminated surfaces;
- ensure that the food establishment operates in safe conditions (drinking water, electricity, facilities).

Flood water or sewer backup can contain microbes and chemical contaminants that can be harmful.

Is water safe to drink?

As of May 9, 2017, tap water is of excellent quality in flooded areas when it comes from the municipal distribution system (aqueduct). This may change, so follow the information on the news. If the water comes from an individual well (artesian well), it is non-potable. In this case, it is necessary to boil the water for one minute before consuming it.

What to throw?

- All foods, whether perishable or not, that have been in direct contact with contaminated water or have been exposed to unsafe temperatures. Foods showing signs of alteration or contamination.
- Perishable foods kept in a refrigerator without electricity for more than 6 hours.
- Perishable foods stored in a freezer that has been extinguished for more than 24 to 48 hours, which are completely thawed and have been exposed to temperatures above 4 ° C (meat, poultry, fish, seafood, dairy products, eggs and prepared foods containing raw or cooked foods).
- Disposable utensils, permeable food packaging, paper towels and unpackaged contaminated packaging.
- Furniture, equipment and carpets that are not removable and washable or that have been soaked.
- Soaked materials, because they promote the growth of mold that can cause serious health problems.
- Wet insulating wool, as it will no longer be a good insulator and can promote mold growth. Have the walls checked up to 50 centimeters or 20 inches above the level reached by the water. Have the insulation replaced inside the water heater, refrigerator and freezer, if it has been wet.

Cleaning and disinfection

- As a result of such a disaster, take several precautions to ensure that objects, furniture and kitchen are not contaminated.
- To avoid contamination, carry out a dewatering operation as soon as possible. Once it is finished, first determine what should be thrown away and then what will be cleaned and disinfected.
- Rubber gloves should be worn to avoid contact with contaminated water and materials, as the risk of infection is high. Even when properly dried, these surfaces can contain bacteria and cause infections. Be extra cautious if there has been flooding by sewage.
- Clean with soapy water all surfaces, as well as cavities and structures that have been in contact with flood water.
- Once this is done, sanitize the surfaces with a sanitizer approved for food use.
- Rinse and clean all floors. If there is a subfloor, ensure that the water has been drained. Wash under the subfloor. Dry thoroughly and check for mold. Wait until everything is dry before closing the cavities.

- Ventilate and dehumidify the area to bring humidity back to normal. In winter, this rate should be between 30% and 50% and should not exceed 60%.
- Check for vermin following the disaster.

Electricity

- A safe food establishment operation cannot take place without electricity.
- In the event of a power outage, see if there is a way to transfer perishable foods elsewhere, in functional refrigerators or freezers. Otherwise, keep the doors of refrigerators and freezers closed to extend the life of the products.
- After 6 hours for a refrigerator and 24 to 48 hours for a freezer, a household is essential among the food.
- To avoid the risk of electrocution during flooding, here are some recommendations:
 - **Before water began to invade the basement**
Shut off power to prevent electric shock or fire. Make sure your feet are dry and that you are not leaning against a metal object.
 - **If water begins to invade the basement**
Do not attempt to shut off the power, contact Hydro-Québec immediately at 1-800-790-2424 to stop service on the meter or pole.
- **When the water has withdrawn**
Before restoring power or using electrical appliances that have been flooded, consult a master electrician.
(Source: Montreal Public Security and Public Security Quebec)

Health

Avoid the contact of your hands or gloves with your face after handling contaminated objects. Be sure to wash your hands thoroughly. If, despite all these precautions, you experience symptoms of persistent diarrhea or acute indigestion, consult your doctor immediately. For information and advice on health, you can contact Info-Santé 8-1-1. Do not get in contact with food if you have gastro-enteric symptoms such as diarrhea, nausea, vomiting and fever.

Info-Santé : 8-1-1

Transport Québec : 5-1-1

Ville de Montréal : 3-1-1

Urgence : 9-1-1

Inspection des aliments : 514 280-4300

Inspection des aliments : ville.montreal.qc.ca/inspectiondesaliments

Sécurité civile – Ville de Montréal : ville.montreal.qc.ca/csc

Sécurité publique - Québec : <http://www.urgencequebec.gouv.qc.ca/Fr/situation-urgence/Pages/Inondation.aspx>