

MEDIA RELEASE

For immediate release

June 3, 2022

Potential health risks related to floods

Much of our region is experiencing ongoing flooding due to the rapid snow melt and heavy rainfall. Northwestern Health Unit (NWHU) reminds the public that with floods, come potential health risks to those impacted by flood water. Some of those risks include:

- Flood waters can contain pollutants such as agricultural waste, chemicals, or raw sewage. Visit Health Canada's [Floods and Your Health](#) webpage for information about the potential dangers of flood water.
- Where flood waters impact buildings, prolonged wet or damp conditions can cause mould growth.
 - People who are sensitive to mould may experience allergic reactions such as asthma, and other allergy-type symptoms. Chronic or severe exposure to mould can cause symptoms like eye, skin, nose and throat irritation, headaches, poor concentration, and fatigue.
 - For general information about mould and cleaning up mould, visit Health Canada's webpage on [Mould](#).
- Flood waters can also impact private drinking water wells. If a well has flood water pooling around or over it, there may be contamination of the ground water in the well. In this case:
 - Use a different source of water for drinking, preparing food, and brushing teeth; or bring water to a rolling boil for at least 1 minute before using. Please visit our [Boil Water Advisories](#) webpage for more information.
 - When the flood waters recede, take a [well water sample](#) to make sure that your water is ok to drink again. Wells that have been contaminated with flood water may require [disinfection](#) before they can be safely used.
- Food that has been in contact with flood waters or has been stored in basements or other areas that have been flooded should be discarded, except for undamaged canned goods.
 - Labels from undamaged cans should be removed, and wash and disinfect the cans before they are opened.
- Structural and electrical safety concerns can also exist when dealing with flood conditions. Please visit Canada's [After a Flood](#) webpage for more information about safely re-entering your home and cleaning up after a flood.

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If you have questions about flood-related health risks, please contact Northwestern Health Unit and ask to speak with a public health inspector.

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Media Contact:

Thomas Nabb

Manager of Environmental Health

Northwestern Health Unit

tnabb@nwhu.on.ca

807-468-3147