

Case Study 6

Evaluation of the Montréal Heat Plan Communication Program^t

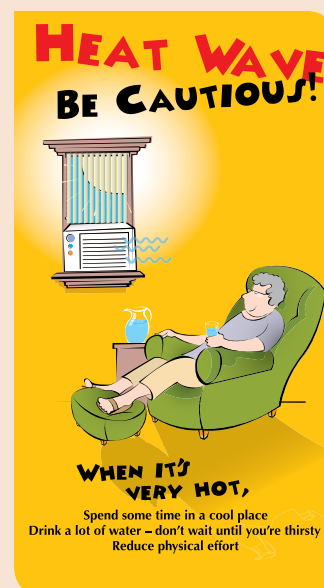
The City of Montréal has had a HARS in place for over 10 years. In 2007, Montréal Public Health conducted an evaluation of its Heat Plan Communication Program with a focus on three main areas:

1. Message dissemination was evaluated by visiting distribution locations of promotional material and by conducting media monitoring. The evaluation assessed:
 - ▶ effectiveness of communication vehicles by reviewing the availability of promotional material (i.e. cards, posters) at the distribution locations
 - ▶ electronic and print media for coordination of coverage with Environment Canada heat warnings and inclusion of prevention messages
2. Exposure of audiences to prevention messages and their impact on knowledge and protective behaviours during extreme heat events was evaluated by a telephone survey of people 65 or older to examine:
 - ▶ exposure to prevention messages
 - ▶ correlation between exposure, knowledge and protective behaviours
3. Comprehension, acceptability and feasibility of the recommended heat-health prevention messages among older adults at high risk was evaluated through focus groups with people 65 or older (all but one living in non-air conditioned homes). The focus groups examined:
 - ▶ physical discomfort levels as an indication of heat stress, willingness to ask for help, resources to adequately deal with extreme heat events
 - ▶ choices of adaptive responses during extreme heat events
 - ▶ evaluation of promotional material and heat-health messages

The result of this evaluation led to modification of Montreal's HARS communication tools (e.g. promotional material largely distributed to older adults). Certain messages were not retained in the new material. For example, the message to avoid alcohol, caffeine and soft drinks is no longer included because the participants in the focus groups did not view it as acceptable, and scientific support for this message is not solid. Participants did not view checking the temperature in their homes as being realistic and therefore this message was also removed. The message to wear light clothing and a hat was followed by the vast majority of seniors, regardless of their exposure to preventative messages; thus, it was not deemed to be useful.

The revisions to the outreach materials allowed for greater focus on three main messages: Seek out air-conditioned spaces, Drink a lot of water and Reduce physical activity. Finally, two other messages were maintained in the promotional material—"Let someone know how you are on a regular basis" and "Take cool showers or baths as often as needed or cool off using a damp facecloth." This latter recommendation was judged most useful by people without air conditioning and who have mobility challenges.

For more information on the Montréal HARS, visit [www.dsp.santemontreal.qc.ca/index.php?id=523&tx_wfqbe_pi1\[uid\]=1023](http://www.dsp.santemontreal.qc.ca/index.php?id=523&tx_wfqbe_pi1[uid]=1023).



Source: Direction de santé publique, Agence de la santé et des services sociaux de Montréal, Que.

^t Direction de santé publique de l'Agence de la santé et des services sociaux de Montréal, Que., 2009.¹⁸²