

## WHAT ARE ENVIRONMENTAL SENSITIVITIES?

People suffering from environmental sensitivities react negatively to all kinds of contaminants (pesticides, cleaning products, solvents, perfumes, mould, electromagnetic radiation, etc.), but at lower levels of exposure that seem to cause no reaction in most people. These reactions can affect multiple systems in the body. In fact, many symptoms can affect several organ systems, such as the respiratory, digestive and nervous systems, as well as the skin. The symptoms can be inconvenient, quite serious, or even debilitating. According to Statistics Canada, environmental sensitivities are becoming an increasingly common health issue.

## ARE ENVIRONMENTAL SENSITIVITIES SIMILAR TO ALLERGIES?

Environmental sensitivities were first thought to be allergies. In both cases, avoidance of triggers allows the person affected to remain healthy. But with the discovery of allergic-response mechanisms (immunoglobulin E), it became clear these mechanisms were not responsible for causing environmental sensitivities. In both cases, however, chemical contamination is linked to their increased prevalence in the population.

## ANOTHER BAN! CAN'T PEOPLE WITH SENSITIVITIES TAKE INTO ACCOUNT MY RIGHT TO WEAR PERFUME?

In keeping with the “balance of convenience” principle, healthy people should make adjustments to avoid adversely affecting the health of a group of people, no matter how small, especially in cases involving the workplace and shared public places. Accommodating people with environmental sensitivities—no fragrances, better ventilation, least-toxic cleaning products—will improve indoor air quality, and benefit everyone. Smoking is now no longer permitted in the workplace and in public buildings. The same principle should apply for environmental sensitivities. Not only will your fellow citizens and colleagues with sensitivities appreciate the gesture, but so will people suffering from asthma, allergies, and other illnesses such as respiratory and heart diseases.

## IN QUEBEC, ARE ENVIRONMENTAL SENSITIVITIES RECOGNIZED AS AN ILLNESS?

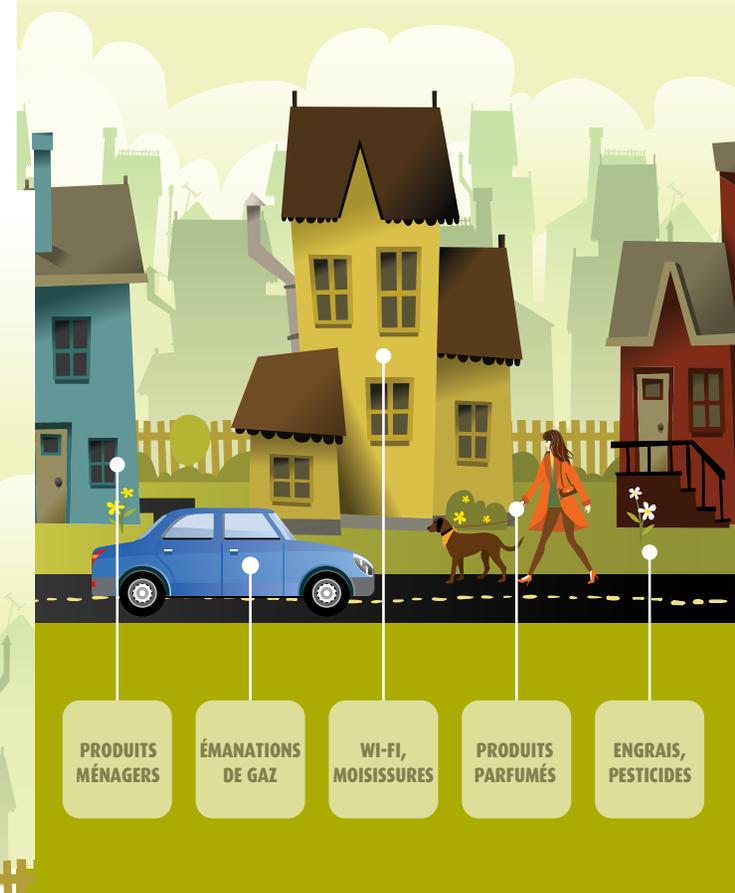
From a legal and human rights perspective, environmental sensitivities are recognized as being a handicap both in Quebec and Canada. The Commission des lésions professionnelles (CLP) has already recognized the right to CSST compensation for workers who have developed environmental sensitivities after exposure in the workplace.

From a medical perspective, as of 2012, the Quebec Ministry of Health and Social Services had still not recognized environmental sensitivities and there was no diagnostic code for the disease. Only a few physicians in Quebec are equipped to diagnose this illness. Some Quebecers who suffer from it are sometimes forced to travel to Ontario to receive care. Others increase the number of medical consultations as their health deteriorates.

There are specialized clinics that treat environmental sensitivities in Ontario and Nova Scotia. The European Parliament has asked member-states to recognize environmental sensitivities in their classification of diseases, if they have not already done so. It is time for Quebec to follow suit!

**SYMPTOMS ARE NOT VISIBLE.  
WHEN PEOPLE SAY THEY ARE  
SENSITIVE TO TOXIC SUB-  
STANCES THAT DON'T AFFECT  
OTHERS, COULDN'T IT JUST BE  
"IN THEIR MIND?"**

It is exactly that heightened susceptibility in an individual, whose body is no longer able to defend itself against a multitude of small toxic attacks, which is the defining characteristic of environmental sensitivities. It is true that some environmental sensitivity symptoms such as headaches, fatigue, difficulty concentrating and feeling dazed, dizzy or brain fogged (lack of cognitive function) are imperceptible to others. The person could therefore appear to be physically normal. However, just because the symptoms are not visible does not mean that they are any less real.



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WHEN THE ENVIRONMENT MAKES YOU ILL

Need to understand, need to act

**For more information :**  
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