

Wildfire Smoke and Health: **What You Need to Know**

If moderate to heavy smoke is visible, air quality has reached levels that are unhealthy.

Not everyone who is exposed to wildfire smoke will have health problems.

Most healthy adults and children will recover quickly from smoke exposure and will not suffer long-term health consequences.

Particulate matter exposure is the principal public health threat from short-term exposures to wildfire smoke.

What are symptoms related to smoke exposure?

- Eye, nose and/or throat irritation--runny eyes and/or nose.
- Coughing, sore throat.
- Trouble breathing or tightness of the chest, which may be symptoms of a health emergency.
- The onset of symptoms related to pre-existing respiratory ailments like asthma or emphysema.
- Weakened immune system after prolonged exposure to smoke.

Who is most impacted by wildfire smoke?

- Children
- Older adults
- Pregnant women
- People with asthma, lung (respiratory) disease, or heart (cardiovascular) disease

How can I protect myself from wildfire smoke?

- Consider limiting outdoor activity when moderate to heavy smoke is present and relocating temporarily if smoke is present indoors and is making you ill.
- Use air conditioners on re-circulate mode and with the highest quality filters appropriate for the model, HEPA air filters, and close your windows. Move to a shelter if you do not have air conditioning and your home is too hot with the windows closed.

Should I wear a mask?

- Because every individual has different sensitivity to smoke, people should consult with their primary health care provider to determine whether a face mask or other form of protection is appropriate.
- Not all masks provide the same amount of protection, and masks may not filter out all harmful gases or particulate matter. Paper or surgical masks will not provide protection from wildfire smoke; particulate masks known as N-95 or P-100 respirators may help, but they must fit well and be used correctly.