

# Protect Your Family From Wildfire Smoke

## Who is at risk?



If you are healthy, short term exposure to smoke is usually not a major health risk. However, if it looks smoky outside, it's not a good time to mow the lawn or go for a run.

Wildfire smoke is a serious health hazard for children, elders and those with chronic heart and lung disease. When it is smoky outdoors, it is not a good time for children to play outdoors. Reducing outdoor activity is a key for reducing one's exposure to wildfire smoke.



If you are active outdoors, pay attention to your symptoms. If you experience burning eyes, runny nose, cough, wheezing, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing it's an indication you need to reduce your exposure to smoke.

## WHAT CAN I DO?

If you live in a high risk wildfire area take steps to prepare for fire season. Key steps to being prepared include:

### CONSIDER PURCHASING A PORTABLE AIR PURIFIER.

Air purifiers are available as portable, stand alone appliances or as filters or air cleaners in a central air system. Portable units are best for single room use. Choose an air purifier with a high CADR (clean air delivery rate). Locate the unit away from doors, windows, curtains and foot traffic. Avoid placing the unit against a wall or in a room corner as it will restrict airflow.

### CONSIDER PURCHASING N95 OR P100 RESPIRATOR MASKS.

The most effective way to protect your health during a wildfire is to stay indoors or limit your time outdoors. People who must be outside for extended periods of time in smoky air or ash covered areas may benefit from having a supply of N95 or P100 respirator masks on hand. These masks can be purchased at your local hardware store, building supply center or drugstore. It is important to keep in mind that using a respirator can make it harder to breath. If you have chronic heart/lung conditions, you should discuss with your doctor before using a respirator.

### KNOW HOW TO ADJUST YOU'RE A/C OR HVAC SYSTEM TO KEEP SMOKE OUT.

If you have a central HVAC system, find out if it has a fresh air intake. If it does, find out how to close it or turn the system to recirculate mode. If you have a window air conditioner, find out how to close the outdoor air damper. If you cannot close the damper, consider preparing other cooling options like a fan. If you have a portable air conditioner with a single hose, do not use it during smoky conditions. Consider other cooling option such as a fan or window air conditioner.

### HAVE A SEVERAL DAY SUPPLY OF NONPERISHABLE FOODS

Opt for foods that do not require cooking as power outages often accompany wildfires. Avoid preparing foods that require frying or broiling as these cooking methods add to indoor air pollution levels.

## OTHER TIPS TO REDUCE SMOKE EXPOSURE:



- ✓ Monitor outdoor air quality by checking your state or local air quality agency's website or [airnow.gov](http://airnow.gov)
- ✓ Keep windows and doors closed.
- ✓ If you have a portable air purifier, run it as often as possible on the highest fan speed.
- ✓ Use fans & air conditioning to stay cool.
- ✓ If you cannot stay cool, seek shelter elsewhere.
- ✓ Avoid activities that generate fine particles indoors:
  - Smoking cigarettes
  - Using gas/propane/wood burning stoves and furnaces
  - Frying or broiling food
  - Burning candles/incense
  - Vacuuming (unless using a vacuum with a HEPA filter)

Sources:

1) <https://www.epa.gov/indoor-air-quality-iaq/wildfires-and-indoor-air-quality-iaq>  
<https://airnow.gov/index.cfm?action=smoke.index>

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