

Wildfire Smoke Is Dangerous To Your Health

Wildfire smoke contains many air pollutants that are known to contribute to cardiovascular and respiratory outcomes. Children, the elderly, and people with preexisting heart and lung diseases or who are immunocompromised may be more impacted by exposure to smoke.

Wildfire Smoke Contains

- Particulate matter, especially fine particulate matter that can go very deep into the lungs and may contain other dangerous substances
- Ozone
- Carbon monoxide
- Polycyclic aromatic compounds
- Nitrogen dioxide

Minimize Your Exposure to Wildfire Smoke »

What You Need to Know Before You Wear a Respirator »



- Bandannas, paper masks that do not fit tightly on your face, and other masks will not provide protection from the most dangerous parts of smoke.
- Some health conditions like heart or lung disease make wearing a respirator difficult or dangerous.
- If you choose to wear a respirator, please make sure you wear it correctly so that it protects you. See www.cdc.gov/niosh/docs/2010-133/pdfs/2010-133.pdf for more information.
- Even if you wear a respirator, spend as little time outdoors as possible. Refrain from physically exerting yourself — when you exert yourself, your breathing becomes deeper and quicker which means you breathe in more smoke more deeply into your lungs.
- N95s and other respirators are urgently needed NOW to protect nurses, other health care workers, and other workers from exposure to COVID-19 and wildfire smoke. Nurses demand that President Trump invoke the Defense Production Act (DPA) to dramatically increase the production and distribution of respirators and other critical personal protective equipment. See NNU's COVID-19 Resources Webpage for more information: <https://www.nationalnursesunited.org/covid-19>

Steps You Can Take at Home »

- Keep windows and doors closed as much as possible.
- If you have an air-conditioning system, set the amount of outside air as low as possible. The system will recycle the air already inside the house instead of continuing to pull in smoky air from outside. Make sure to change the filters in the air conditioning system regularly.
- If you have to go outside, consider wearing a respirator.
- Use bottled water until your local water control agency has approved tap water.

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Study on Emergency Department Visits and the 2015 Wildfire Season

After the big fires in California in 2015, researchers investigated whether visits to the emergency departments went up after days with heavy smoke.

The study found that »

-  ED visits increased significantly for all adults when smoke was denser, but especially for adults over 65 years old.
-  The risk for a heart attack increased significantly for adults over 65 years old following a day with dense smoke.
-  The risk for strokes significantly increased for adults over 65 years old even on light and medium smoke days.
-  ED visits for asthma increased significantly on days with medium and heavy smoke.

Source: Wettstein et al. *Journal of the American Heart Association*, April 17, 2018.

For more information, see the California Department of Public Health's FAQs on wildfire smoke » www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/EPO/Pages/BP_Wildfire_FAQs.aspx.

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