

Wildfire Smoke Health Watch

[Announcer] This program is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Wildfires produce smoke that may reach your community. The smoke is a mixture of gases from burning trees and other plant materials. Smoke hurts your eyes, irritates your respiratory system, and worsens chronic heart and lung diseases. Exposure to wildfire smoke causes coughing, a scratchy throat, irritated sinuses, shortness of breath, chest pain, headaches, stinging eyes, a runny nose, and asthma episodes.

Wildfires deposit large amounts of ash on indoor and outdoor surfaces in areas near the fire. Like smoke, ash can be irritating to your nose and throat and may cause coughing. Take steps to protect yourself from wildfire smoke and ash.

If you must be outdoors in a smoky area, avoid exertion. Check local air quality reports and listen to updates on the amount of smoke pollution in the air. If advised to stay indoors, keep all doors and windows shut. Don't add to indoor air pollution by using anything that burns, like candles, fireplaces, or gas stoves. Don't vacuum, because it stirs up particles already inside your home. And definitely don't smoke. Run an air conditioner if you have one, but keep the fresh-air intake closed and the filter clean to prevent outdoor smoke from getting inside.

"Dust" masks, commonly found at hardware stores, aren't reliable because they're designed to trap large particles, such as sawdust. They won't protect your lungs from the small particles found in wildfire smoke.

If you have asthma or another lung disease, follow your doctor's advice regarding your respiratory management plan and medications. If you're advised to evacuate, do so immediately and follow the designated evacuation route. Protect yourself by wearing sturdy shoes, cotton or woolen clothing, long pants, a long-sleeved shirt, and gloves. Carry a handkerchief to protect your face and avoid traveling through smoke on roadways.

If your home has been damaged in a wildfire, use protective gear, such as gloves, goggles, and N95 masks to protect yourself from the ash and debris.

For more information, visit emergency.cdc.gov/disasters/wildfires.

[Announcer] For the most accurate health information, visit www.cdc.gov or call 1-800-CDC-INFO.