



## PROTECT YOUR HEALTH FROM WILDFIRE SMOKE



**Wildfire smoke can affect your health in many ways.**



Smoke from wildfire is a mix of gases and fine particulates from burning vegetation, building materials and other combustible materials. It is a potential hazard for everyone and can cause a number of physical symptoms if not recognized right away. The most affected include the elderly, children, and people suffering from heart and lung conditions.

### **How can it make me sick?**

Breathing in smoke from a wildfire can cause immediate health effects, including:

- Eye irritation,
- Runny nose
- Headache
- Cough,
- Asthmatic attack
- Chest pain
- Worsening of an existing or chronic lung problem and heart disease
- Older adults, pregnant women, children and people with preexisting respiratory and heart conditions may be more likely to get sick if they breathe in wildfire smoke.

### **Tips for protecting yourself from breathing wildfire smoke**

- Watch for news or public health warnings about smoke. Pay attention to local air quality reports. Go to the website of the Air Quality Management District to see the U.S. Air Quality Index in your area at: <https://www.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=dd4a15deed8647edacb14f140ca83d05>
- Stay indoors and keep your indoor air as clean as possible. Keep windows and doors closed. Run an air conditioner if you have one, but keep the fresh air intake closed and filter clean to prevent outdoor smoke from getting inside.
- Seek shelter elsewhere if you do not have an air conditioner and it's too warm to stay inside with the windows closed.
- Do not add to indoor pollution. When smoke levels are high, do not use anything that burns, such as candles and fireplaces. Do not smoke tobacco and other products.

- Although dust masks will not protect your lungs completely from smoke, it can offer some protection especially for smoke particulates. Particulate respirators are air purifying respirators because they clean particles out of the air as you breathe. Respirator that can filter not only chemical gases and particles out of the air we breathe is the Gas Mask respirator. This respirator includes a face piece or mask, and a filter/cartridge. When the user inhales, air is pulled through the filter and any toxic chemicals or particles are stopped from getting into the lungs in the process. For further information on respiratory protection, go to the Respiratory Fact Sheet provided by the CDC's National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health at: <https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/docs/2003-144/>
- Follow your doctor's advice about medicines and your respiratory management plan if you have asthma or lung or heart disease. Call your doctor should your symptoms worsen as a result of exposure to wildfire smoke.

### Tips for Pregnant Women and Parents of Young Infants



- Be prepared to evacuate quickly and have important items ready to go.
- Take copies of any medical records including immunization records of infants.
- Take your prescription medicines including baby medicines with you.
- Bring bottled water to make sure you have plenty to drink. Make sure your baby gets plenty of breast milk or formula.
- Be prepared to tell the staff at the shelter or temporary housing that you are pregnant and about any special needs or health problems that you may have. Let them know if your baby has special needs or health problems as well as any medicine your baby is taking.
- Avoid breathing smoke or fumes and keep baby away where there is smoke, and stay indoors if possible.

**This guidance is general in nature; specific situations may require additional considerations. If specific questions arise, please contact:**

**Los Angeles County Fire Dept.  
Health Hazardous Materials Division  
(323) 890-4317 - Mon. to Fri. 8am to 5pm.**