

Asthma and Wildfires

Smoke from wildfires is a mixture of gases and fine particles from burning trees and other plant materials. Smoke can hurt your eyes, irritate your respiratory system, and worsen chronic lung diseases, including asthma, emphysema and bronchitis.

Groups at heightened risk for health problems from smoke exposure include children, older adults and anyone with lung diseases. Children are particularly susceptible to smoke because their respiratory systems are still developing and they breathe in more air — and consequently more pollution — per pound of body mass than adults.

The Oregon Public Health Division recommends individuals who are sensitive to smoke exposure take the following precautions:

- **Reduce the amount of time spent outdoors.**
This can usually provide some protection, especially in a tightly closed, air-conditioned house in which the air conditioner can be set to re-circulate air instead of bringing in outdoor air. Staying inside with the doors and windows closed can usually reduce exposure.
- **Reduce the amount of time engaged in vigorous outdoor physical activity.** This can be an important and effective strategy to lower the dose of inhaled air pollutants and minimize health risks during a smoke event.
- **Reduce other sources of indoor air pollution.** Many indoor sources of air pollution can emit large amounts of the same pollutants present in wildfire smoke. Indoor sources such as burning cigarettes, gas, propane and wood-burning stoves and furnaces, and activities such as cooking, burning candles and

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[http://public.health.oregon.gov/
DiseasesConditions/
ChronicDisease/Asthma](http://public.health.oregon.gov/DiseasesConditions/ChronicDisease/Asthma)

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

[www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/
asthma/wildfires.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/asthma/wildfires.htm)

American Lung Association

[www.lungusa.org/healthy-air/
outdoor/protecting-your-health/
what-makes-air-unhealthy/
forest-fires-respiratory-health-
fact-sheet.html](http://www.lungusa.org/healthy-air/outdoor/protecting-your-health/what-makes-air-unhealthy/forest-fires-respiratory-health-fact-sheet.html)

incense, and vacuuming can greatly increase the particle levels in a home. These sources of indoor air pollution should be avoided during high pollution or when wildfire smoke is present.

Individuals with lung diseases such as asthma should follow their health care providers' advice about prevention and treatment of symptoms, including using the full spectrum of medications their doctor has prescribed to control the symptoms. Those with an asthma action plan should follow it closely and monitor their breathing and exposure to airborne matter.

Anyone experiencing symptoms should contact a health care provider for further advice, or call 911 in an emergency.