

Forest fire smoke and your health

Forest fire smoke can affect your health. People with respiratory or heart conditions, such as asthma, can experience worsened symptoms during minor and severe smoke events. During severe smoke events even healthy individuals can be affected and may experience irritation of the eyes, throat and possibly shortness of breath.

Everyone – in particular those with pre-existing respiratory or heart conditions – should monitor their symptoms and seek medical care if symptoms worsen.

Who is at risk?

People with pre-existing heart and respiratory conditions such as asthma are most at risk; however, everyone can be at risk during a severe smoke event and should monitor their symptoms. Take appropriate precautionary measures and seek medical care if symptoms worsen.

How do I protect myself?

During a severe smoke event:

- Reduce or avoid strenuous outdoor activities – especially if you experience symptoms such as coughing and throat irritation.
- Children, the elderly and those with pre-existing medical conditions, such as heart and respiratory disease, should be especially cautious.
- Do not rely on dust masks, bandanas, and cloths (even if wet), since they are designed to trap large particles and not designed to protect lungs from smoke. Well-fitted respirators (e.g. N95) offer the most effective protection from fine particulate matter (PM2.5).
- Reduce or eliminate exposure to outside air when inside. Close windows and close ventilation systems that bring outdoor air indoors.
- Stay inside and turn on your air conditioner. Check to make sure it does not bring outdoor air indoors.
- Go to an air-conditioned public space (mall, library, church) to reduce exposure to outdoor air.
- If you have a HEPA air cleaner that will reduce levels of small particles in indoor air, use it and stay in the room where it is located.
- Avoid tobacco smoke exposure. Smoking puts added stress on your lungs and those around you.

Where can I go for more information?

- The Saskatchewan Public Safety Agency is responsible for provincial emergency management, fire safety and wildfire management in Saskatchewan.
For live air quality updates visit <https://www.saskpublicsafety.ca>.
- For information regarding Saskatchewan's Air Quality Index visit the Government of Canada website <https://www.canada.ca/en/environment-climate-change/services/air-quality-health-index.html>
- Individuals experiencing symptoms can call HealthLine at 811 to speak to a registered nurse. Health Line is available 24 hours a day.
- Get the [SaskAlert app](#). Saskatchewan's Emergency Public Alerting program alerts the public of an emergency situation in real-time. [Learn more about SaskAlert](#).
- Visit Environment and Climate Change Canada [for more information and resources on wildfire smoke, air quality and your health](#).