

MASK REFERENCES

Natural Disasters and Severe Weather | Wildfire Smoke and COVID-19

https://www.cdc.gov/disasters/covid-19/wildfire_smoke_covid-19.html



Wildfire smoke can irritate your lungs, cause inflammation, affect your immune system, and make you more prone to lung infections, including SARS-CoV-2, the virus that cause COVID-19. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, preparing for wildfires might be a little different this year. Know how wildfire smoke can affect you and your loved ones during the COVID-19 pandemic and what you can do to protect yourselves.

Prepare for wildfires.

Prepare for the wildfire smoke season [PDF-205 KB] as you would in any other summer.

Give yourself more time than usual to prepare for wildfire events. Home delivery is the safest choice for buying disaster supplies; however, that may not be an option for everyone. If in-person shopping is your only option, take steps to protect your and others' health when running essential errands.

Talk with a healthcare provider. Plan how you will protect yourself against wildfire smoke.

Stock up on medicines routinely taken. Store a 7 to 10-day supply of prescription medicines in a waterproof, childproof container to take with you if you evacuate.

As part of your planning for a potential evacuation, consider developing a family disaster plan.

Cloth masks will not protect you from wildfire smoke.

Cloth masks that are used to slow the spread of COVID-19 by blocking respiratory droplets offer little protection against wildfire smoke. They do not catch small, harmful particles in smoke that can harm your health.

Although N95 respirators do provide protection from wildfire smoke, they might be in short supply as frontline healthcare workers use them during the pandemic.

Take actions to protect yourself from wildfire smoke during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The best way to protect against the potentially harmful effects of wildfire smoke is to reduce your exposure to wildfire smoke, for example, by seeking cleaner air shelters and cleaner air spaces.

Limit your outdoor exercise when it is smoky outside or choose lower-intensity activities to reduce your smoke exposure.

Keep in mind that while social distancing guidelines are in place, finding cleaner air might be harder if public facilities such as libraries, community centers, and shopping malls are closed or have limited their capacity.

Create a cleaner air space at home to protect yourself from wildfire smoke during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Use a portable air cleaner in one or more rooms. Portable air cleaners work best when run continuously with doors and windows closed.

If you use a do-it-yourself box fan filtration unit, never leave it unattended.

During periods of extreme heat, pay attention to temperature forecasts and know how to stay safe in the heat.

Whenever you can, use air conditioners, heat pumps, fans, and window shades to keep your cleaner air space comfortably cool on hot days.

If you have a forced air system in your home, you may need to speak with a qualified heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) professional about different filters (HEPA or MERV-13 or higher) and settings (“Recirculate” and “On” rather than “Auto”) you can use to reduce indoor smoke.

Avoid activities that create more indoor and outdoor air pollution, such as frying foods, sweeping, vacuuming, and " using gas-powered appliances.

Know the difference between symptoms from smoke exposure and COVID-19.

Some symptoms, like dry cough, sore throat, and difficulty breathing can be caused by both wildfire smoke exposure and COVID-19.

Learn about symptoms of COVID-19. Symptoms like fever or chills, muscle or body aches, and diarrhea are not related to smoke exposure.

If you have any of these symptoms, the CDC COVID-19 Self-Checker can help you determine whether you need further assessment or testing for COVID-19. If you have questions after using the CDC COVID-19 Self-Checker, contact a healthcare provider.

If you have severe symptoms, like difficulty breathing or chest pain, immediately call 911 or the nearest emergency facility.

People with COVID-19 are at increased risk from wildfire smoke during the pandemic.

People who currently have or who are recovering from COVID-19 may be at increased risk of health effects from exposure to wildfire smoke due to compromised heart and/or lung function related to COVID-19.

Know whether you are at risk from wildfire smoke during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Some people are more at risk of harmful health effects from wildfire smoke than others.

Those most at risk include:

Children less than 18 years old

Adults aged 65 years or older

Pregnant women

People with chronic health conditions such as heart or lung disease, asthma, and diabetes

Outdoor workers People who have lower socioeconomic status, including individuals experiencing homelessness or those who have limited access to medical care

People who are immunocompromised or taking drugs that suppress the immune system

Know what to do if you must evacuate.

- Pay attention to local guidance about updated plans for evacuations and shelters, including [potential shelters for your pets](#).
- Whether you decide to evacuate or are asked to evacuate by state or local authorities, [evacuate safely](#).
- When you check on neighbors and friends before evacuating, be sure to follow [social distancing](#) recommendations (staying at least 6 feet from others) and [other CDC recommendations](#) to protect yourself and others.
- If you need to go to a disaster shelter, follow CDC recommendations for staying safe and healthy in a [public disaster shelter](#) during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Stay informed. Know where to find information about air quality and COVID-19 in your area.

- Use the [Air Quality Indexexternal icon](#) (AQI) to check the air quality in your area.
- Visit [airnow.govexternal icon](#) to find reliable information about wildfire smoke and air quality.

- If there is a large wildfire in your area, then there is likely an [Air Resource Advisorexternal icon](#) assigned to provide [wildfire smoke outlooksexternal icon](#).
- For further information about wildfire smoke and your health, visit, <https://www.cdc.gov/air/wildfire-smoke/default.htm>.
- Visit the [CDC COVID Data Tracker](#) for more information about COVID-19.
- Check resources from [state, local, tribal, and territorial health departments](#) for more information on COVID-19 cases and deaths in a given area.

For more information about COVID-19, go to <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>

For more information about the health effects of wildfire smoke and reducing exposure to it:

- [Create a Clean Room to Protect Indoor Air Quality During a Wildfireexternal icon](#)
- [DIY Box Fan Filterexternal icon](#)
- [Natural Disasters and Severe Weather: Wildfires](#)
- [Protect Yourself from Wildfire Smoke](#)
- [Wildfire Guide Factsheet: Indoor Air Filtration pdf icon\[PDF-122 KB\]external icon](#)
- [Wildfires and Indoor Air Qualityexternal icon](#)

For more information on air quality, wildfire information, smoke forecasts, and vulnerable populations:

- [airnow.govexternal icon](#)
- [https://airquality.weather.gov/external icon](https://airquality.weather.gov/)
- [https://inciweb.nwcg.gov/external icon](https://inciweb.nwcg.gov/)
- <https://www.cdc.gov/disasters/wildfires/links.html>