Center for Living Health

Tips to Minimize Harmful Health Effects & Protect Your Family From Wildfire Smoke

Even though the air may look clear or you may not smell smoke, it may contain small particulate matter when AQI levels are high. These tiny particulates can travel deep into the lungs. Wildfire Smoke is different because of the small feathery ash and dust-like soot particulates (less than 1 micron), much of it invisible to the eye.

Children and the elderly are more likely to be affected by health threats from smoke. Children's airways are still developing and they breathe more air per pound of body weight than adults.

The best defense is to STAY INDOORS to minimize smoke exposure.

- Close all windows, doors, and any other openings and run your Air conditioning. By default, these systems re-circulate air in the home, so they filter air without pulling in additional particulates from outdoors

- Change the filter in your HVAC system. A filter with a MERV rating of 9-13 will filter and reduce indoor particulars
- Additionally, run a HEPA filter or other room air filtration system that does NOT generate ozone.

  If you don't have a air purifier, look below for instructions for an easy & inexpensive DIY version to keep your home's air clean.

- When in a car, keep windows and vents closed. Turn the air-conditioning to re-circulate mode.

- Drink Water and keep well hydrated – this keeps the mucus in your lungs thinner so they can clear out the secretions.

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- IF you have to be outside, wear a mask that is designed to protect the lungs from small particles found in wildfire smoke. It must be a **mask with a N-95 classification**. The fabric and paper masks we've all been wearing during COVID-19 will not protect you from the smoke particulates

What are some smoke related symptoms parents can look for?

- Decreased activity level

- Increased coughing

- Wheezing and/or audible breathing sounds

- Change in color or pallor of skin

- Easily fatigued

- Breathing hard

To see if a child is having problems breathing, observe if they are breathing fast

To Prevent Undue Emotional Distress/Stress, We Advise Patients To Avoid Exposing Your Child To Any TV or Other Media Coverage Of The Wildfires

Any air quality level over 150 is hazardous for all people, to monitor your local levels we recommend these sites:

Fire.airnow.gov

Purpleair.com

When wildfire smoke causes unhealthy air quality, it is best to remain indoors, with your air conditioning on, as much as possible.

Below is the EPA air quality index for air levels:

| Air Quality Index Levels of Health Concern	Numerical Value	Meaning
Good	0 to 50	Air quality is considered satisfactory, and air pollution poses little or no risk
Moderate	51 to 100	Air quality is acceptable; however, for some pollutants there may be a moderate health concern for a very small number of people who are unusually sensitive to air pollution.
Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups	101 to 150	Members of sensitive groups may experience health effects. The general public is not likely to be affected.
Unhealthy	151 to 200	Everyone may begin to experience health effects; members of sensitive groups may experience more serious health effects.
Very Unhealthy	201 to 300	Health alert: everyone may experience more serious health effects
Hazardous	301 to 500	Health warnings of emergency conditions. The entire population is more likely to be affected.

DIY Room Air Filter

A simple box fan can be converted to an inexpensive air filter by duct taping an air filter to the back. You can use up to 3 filters per fan.

Air Filter must be a high efficiency filter and have at least a Merv-13 ratin. The addition of a charcoal filter can also help to reduce odors, like those that come from wildfire smoke
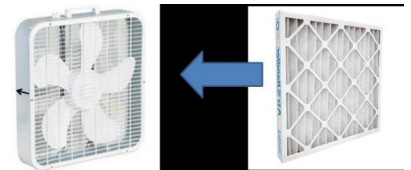
Duct tape the filter to the back of the fan (There are arrows marked on the filter to indicate the proper direction for airflow. The arrows should point towards the fan.)

Check the filter: You can tell when it's time to change the filter by its color - as dust and particulates get caught in the filter, it will turn from white to brown.

Questions?
contact us at patientinfo@centerforlivinghealth.com
or call us at 916 803 7040