

CLIMATE CHANGE: WILDFIRES AND CHILDREN'S HEALTH

Wildfires create large amounts of smoke and ash.

How does climate change contribute to wildfires?

- Extreme heat and long droughts make wildfires larger and more frequent in many regions.

How do wildfires affect young children's health?

- **Breathing Problems**
 - Smoke and ash can irritate the eyes and lungs and can cause breathing problems in children. Children with asthma or allergies are especially sensitive.
- **Mental Health**
 - Children may feel anxious or fearful.

Child-Related Action Steps:

Prevention:

- Seal leaks, cracks and holes, and install weather stripping around doorways.
- Install a high-efficiency filter (MERV 13+) in your central air conditioner unit and/or have a portable HEPA air purifier. Keep backup filters on hand.
- Keep N95 masks on hand in case you need to go outside.
- Keep supplies available, including bottled water, at least a week's worth of medication, first-aid kit, and batteries.
- If a family member has asthma, have a written Asthma Action Plan.

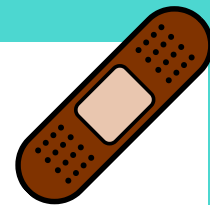


During a Wildfire:

- **Check your air quality.**
 - Air quality conditions can change quickly, so check your local air quality at airnow.gov.
- **Stay inside.**
 - Keep doors and windows closed and stay inside when air quality is unhealthy.
- **Filter the indoor air.**
 - Run your AC unit with a high efficiency filter (MERV 13+) or use a HEPA room air purifier.
- **Avoid outdoor physical activity.**
 - In smoky conditions, avoid vigorous physical activity to limit the amount of smoke breathed into the lungs.

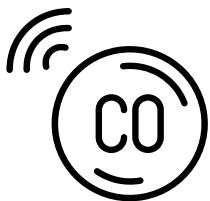


Child-Related Action Steps:



During a Wildfire:

- **Lower levels of indoor air pollution.**
 - Use cooking methods that create less smoke like boiling or steaming.
 - Avoid grilling or frying food.
 - Avoid using wood-burning appliances or candles/incense.
- **Use masks when outdoors.**
 - Wear a well-fitted N95 mask if you go outdoors: A well-fitting KN95, KF94, or surgical mask is better than wearing no mask if N95 masks are not available.
 - Dust masks, bandanas and breathing through a wet cloth will not protect your child from smoke.
- **Seek medical care if needed.**
 - If your child has severe trouble breathing or change in their health condition, consult your child's health care provider.
- **Ensure generator safety.**
 - If you plan to use a backup generator, make sure it is outside at least 20 feet away from your home. Install a carbon monoxide (CO) alarm inside your home.



After a Wildfire:

- Wear gloves, goggles, long sleeves and pants, and a well-fitted N95 mask when cleaning up ash.
- Mist the ash with water, then gently sweep and dispose in a trash bag.
- Wash off all outdoor toys and do not let children play in ash.

Resources:

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).
 - Wildfire Smoke and Children. <https://www.cdc.gov/air/wildfire-smoke/children.htm>
 - Carbon Monoxide (CO) Poisoning. <https://www.cdc.gov/disasters/cofacts.html>
- Western State PEHSU. Masks to Protect Children and Pregnant People from Wildfire Smoke. <https://wspehsu.ucsf.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/mask-or-respirator-use-by-children-and-pregnant-women-during-wildfire-smoke-events.pdf>
- National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association (NOAA). Wildfire Climate Connection. <https://www.noaa.gov/noaa-wildfire/wildfire-climate-connection>
- Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health. Wildfires and Health. <https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/c-change/subtopics/wildfires-and-health/>

