



Reduce Your Smoke Exposure

When wildfires create smoky conditions, there are things you can do indoors and out to minimize your exposure to smoke. Reducing exposure is important for everyone's health and is especially important for people at greater risk of health effects, including children, older adults, pregnant women, people with heart or lung disease, and people who may experience greater exposures (e.g., outdoor workers).

Know your air quality. Check your state, local, or Tribal air quality agency's website or the AirNow [Fire and Smoke Map](#) for air quality forecasts and current air quality conditions. On [Airnow.gov](#), you can sign up to get email notifications or download the app. In addition, some communities have visual range programs that allow you to assess smoke conditions based on how far you can see.

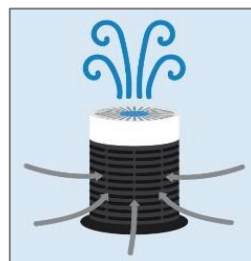
Reduce Smoke Exposure Indoors

Stay inside with the doors and windows closed. Close the fresh air intake if your cooling or ventilation system has one (sometimes called "recirculate mode").

If you have central air conditioning or a forced air furnace, use high-efficiency filters (MERV 13, or as high as your system can handle) and run the fan continuously to capture fine particles from smoke. Ask an HVAC professional what type of high-efficiency filter is compatible with your system. See the [Indoor Air Filtration](#) Wildfire Guide fact sheet for more information about using your home HVAC system to clean your indoor air.

Use a portable air cleaner (often sold as an "air purifier").

Make sure it is powerful enough for the room size and produces little or no ozone, which is a harmful air pollutant (see [California's list of certified air cleaners](#)). You can also make a DIY air cleaner using a box fan and one or more high-efficiency HVAC filters. Replace filters when they are dirty (which may be more frequently than the manufacturer recommends). See the [Indoor Air Filtration](#) Wildfire Guide fact sheet for more tips about selecting and using a portable air cleaner or DIY air cleaner.



A portable air cleaner or DIY air cleaner can help reduce smoke exposure indoors.

Graphics from Santa Barbara County Air Pollution Control District

Create a “cleaner air room” in your home where you can keep levels of smoke as low as possible. Pick a room big enough for everyone in your household to be comfortable. Use a portable air cleaner in the room. See the [How to Create a Cleaner Room at Home](#) Wildfire Guide fact sheet for advice on selecting a room and cleaning the indoor air.

If you do not have air conditioning and must open your windows to cool your home, close doors and windows once the air indoors is cool and use an air cleaner to filter the indoor air. Seek shelter elsewhere if you cannot tolerate smoke and cannot stay cool indoors with the windows closed. See the [Protect Yourself From Smoke and Heat](#) Wildfire Guide fact sheet for advice on keeping your indoor air as cool and clean as possible when it is hot and smoky outside.

Do not add to indoor air pollution. Do not burn candles or incense or use gas, propane, wood-burning stoves, fireplaces, or aerosol sprays. Do not smoke tobacco products, vape, or vacuum (unless your vacuum has a HEPA filter). Avoid cooking on a stove or in an oven, especially when using high heat or for a long cooking time. All of these can increase air pollution indoors.

Consider using an air sensor(s) to monitor your indoor air quality. During smoke events, air sensors can provide useful, real-time information about air pollution levels indoors. This can help you understand which actions, such as air filtration, most effectively reduce your smoke exposure indoors. See the Wildfire Guide fact sheet [Using Air Quality Sensors for Smoke](#) for more information on selecting and placing air sensors and interpreting sensor data.

Air out your home when air quality improves. Long-term smoke events usually have periods when the air is better. Take advantage of these breaks by opening windows and letting cleaner air indoors.

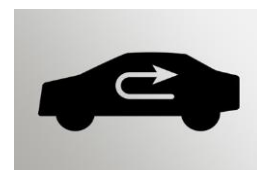
Reduce Smoke Exposure Outdoors

Take it easier during smoky times to reduce how much smoke you inhale. If it is smoky outside, avoid strenuous activities, such as mowing the lawn or going for a run. Smoke levels can change a lot throughout the day, so wait until air quality is better before you are active outdoors.

Have enough food and medication on hand to last several days so you do not have to go out for supplies. If you must go out, avoid the smokiest times of day.

Reduce smoke in your vehicle by closing the windows and running the air conditioner in recirculate mode. Slow down when driving in smoky conditions that limit visibility.

Have a supply of NIOSH Approved® N95® respirators and learn how to use them. They are sold at many home improvement stores, hardware stores, pharmacies, and online. Do not rely on dust masks or bandanas for protection from smoke. If you must be outside in smoky conditions, an N95 respirator reduces your exposure to the fine particles in smoke if it fits snugly to your face and does not leave gaps. They do not come in children’s sizes, but some older children may be able to use an adult size small respirator. Children under 2 years old should not wear a respirator. See the Wildfire Guide fact sheet [Protect Your Lungs From Wildfire Smoke](#) for more information about using respirators.



Use recirculate mode can reduce smoke in a vehicle.

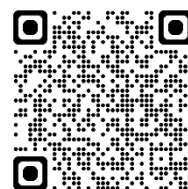
Pay attention to local air quality reports, health warnings, and alerts. Public service announcements provide important information, such as changing conditions, cancelled events, or evacuation notices.

Reduce your risk of health effects:

- ☒ Have enough medication and food for at least 5 days on hand.
- ☒ Follow your health care provider's advice about what to do if you have heart or lung disease.
- ☒ If you have asthma, follow your asthma management plan.
- ☒ If you feel sick, reduce your exposure to smoke and contact your health care provider.
- ☒ Pay attention to public service announcements, health advisories, and air quality advisories.

Resources

Scan the QR code to the right to access an online version of this fact sheet and the additional resources below.



- **[AirNow Fire and Smoke Map](#)**
 - **[IOS App](#)**
 - **[Android App](#)**
- **[Wildfire Guide Fact Sheets](#)**
- **[Resources and Information on Wildland Fires and Smoke](#)**
- **[Infographics on Staying Safe Before, During and After Fires](#)**



U.S. Environmental Protection Agency | EPA-452/F-26-002