



# Wildfire Smoke Action Plan and Tip Sheet

**For Patients**

Use this plan and tips to stay safe if wildfire smoke is in the air around you. Share this plan with everyone in your home and with friends and family members. Review this information every year so that everyone is ready to act when there is wildfire smoke.

## Wildfire smoke is dangerous to your health

Wildfire smoke increases the risk of lung problems, heart problems, and other health problems. It is particularly dangerous if you have ongoing health issues such as asthma, COPD, or heart or blood vessel disease.

### Before wildfire smoke

- Be aware that being outside when there is smoke may pose a health risk.
- Wildfires and wildfire smoke can make the air dangerous to breathe.

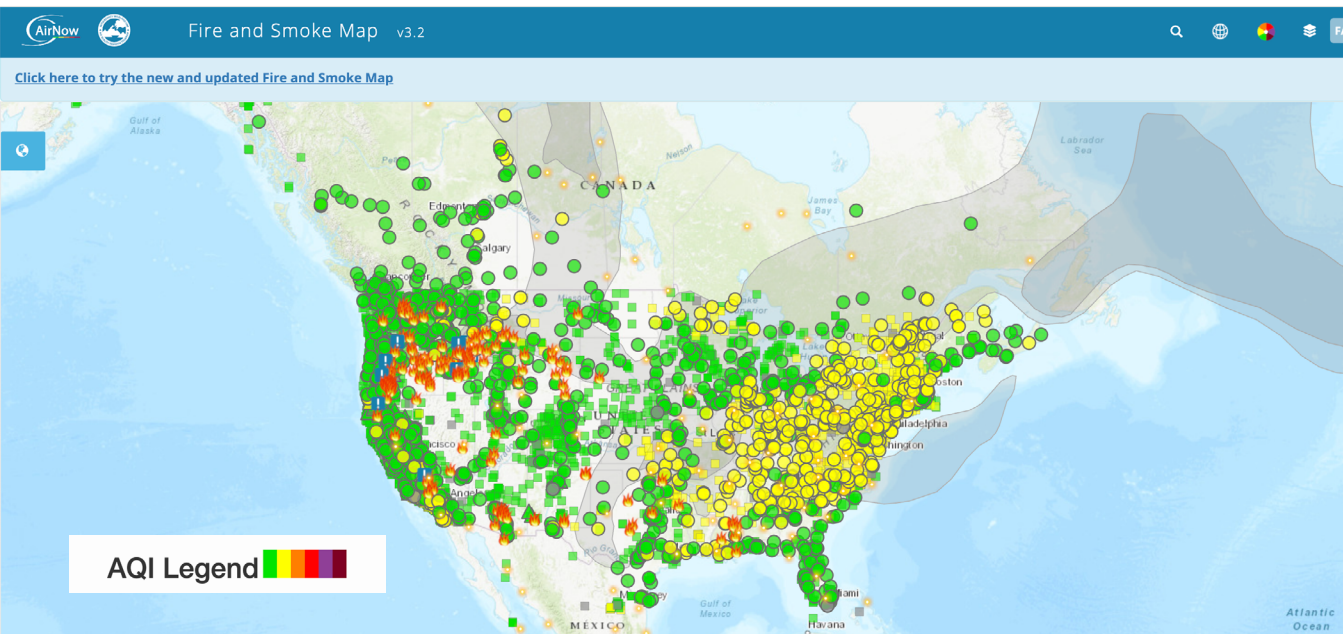
**To know when the air outside may not be safe to breathe, I will check my local air quality at:**

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Check for fires and wildfire smoke near you on your phone, computer, or local news or radio station. Most phone weather apps now include information on air quality.

You can also get information on wildfire location and smoke at [fire.airnow.gov](http://fire.airnow.gov) and [NOAA-HRRR](http://NOAA-HRRR) (click the eye icon next to Near Surface Smoke, then click the play button at the bottom of the screen).

The website will tell you how safe the air outside is to breathe by giving you an air quality index (AQI) number for your community.



When wildfire smoke is near where you live, or you can see smoke in the air, you may need to check every hour as air quality can change quickly.

Prepare your home for poor air quality.

- Learn how to seal indoor air and make or buy air cleaners. See the separate sheet on making an air filter.

## Understand which individuals may be more at risk from wildfire smoke

Wildfire smoke harms everyone's health, but certain individuals may be more at risk. You could be extra sensitive to smoke if you:

- have a breathing condition, such as asthma or COPD
- have heart diseases, such as heart failure
- have chronic renal disease
- are over 65-years-old or under 18-years-old
- work outdoors
- are pregnant - smoke can harm the fetus leading to preterm births and stillbirth

## During wildfire smoke

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Know what to do when the air outside is not safe.

- Most websites will tell you how safe the air outside is to breathe by giving you an air quality index (AQI) number. The higher the AQI number, the less safe the air is.
- You can check the AQI at [airnow.gov](https://airnow.gov) and access visualized smoke forecasts at [NOAA-HRRR](https://noaa-hrrr.org) (click the eye icon next to Near Surface Smoke, then click the play button at the bottom of the screen).
- Take the steps below to protect yourself when the air is not safe. Check with your healthcare provider for any additional precautions based on your own risks.

Understanding wildfire smoke air quality index (AQI)					
AQI Levels	Good AQI: 0-50	Moderate AQI: 51-100	Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups AQI: 101-150	Unhealthy AQI: 151-200	Very Unhealthy - Hazardous AQI: 201+
<b>AQI Level Descriptions:</b>	Air quality is good	The air quality is acceptable. However, there may be a risk for some people, particularly those sensitive to air pollution.	Members of sensitive groups may experience health effects. The general public is less likely to be affected.	Some members of the general public may experience health effects; members of sensitive groups may experience more serious health effects.	Health alert: The risk of health effects is increased for everyone. Health warning of emergency conditions: everyone is more likely to be affected.
<b>Visibility &amp; Smell</b> For particulate pollution, such as smoke, if you do not have access to AQI information, you can estimate based on visibility to landmarks.	No smell or visible signs of pollution  Visibility: 11+ miles	Light haze, no smell  Visibility: 10- 5 miles	Visible haze, minor smell  Visibility: 3 - 5 miles	Significant haze or change in sunlight and smell  Visibility: 1 - 2 miles	Major haze or change in sunlight and strong smell  Visibility: <1 mile
<b>Activity [Sensitive Groups]</b> People with heart or lung diseases, 65+ years old, children and teenagers, pregnant people, minority populations, and outdoor workers.	No restrictions	Consider making outdoor activities shorter and less intense. Watch for health-related symptoms.	Limit time spent outdoors and reduce physical activity. Watch for health-related symptoms.	Avoid the outdoors and physical activity. Use an N95 mask if outdoors.	Avoid the outdoors and reduce physical activity. Use an N95 mask if outdoors.
<b>Activity [Non-sensitive Groups]:</b> Individuals who are normally resistant to short-term effects of smoke and do not fall under any of the sensitive group categories.	No restrictions			Reduce long or intense activities. Take more breaks during outdoor activities.	

Adapted from:

[Air quality Guide for Particle Pollution, August 2015, EPA-456/F-15-005 \(airnow.gov\)](#)

[AQMD - AB 661 AQI Chart \(General Public Rebrand\) - SMAQMD-0122-12 - V10 - PROOF \(airquality.org\)](#)

[NM-Tracking - Fires, Smoke and Health](#)

**When the air outside is dangerous, keep the air inside your home as clean as possible**

**Reduce indoor air pollution sources**

			
<p>Close windows.</p>	<p>Reduce cooking indoors.</p>	<p>Do not smoke or burn firewood, candles or incense.</p>	<p>Avoid vacuuming.</p>

- Do not smoke, or burn firewood, candles, or incense or vacuum.
- Cooking stoves, especially gas cooking stoves, release air pollution. If you have an exhaust vent, use it when cooking.
- If you do not have an exhaust vent, **try to not cook with the stove or oven if the AQI is above 100 (or above 50 if you have asthma or COPD).**
- **Use indoor air cleaners to remove dangerous smoke particles from the air.** The **All About Air Purifiers** sheet has more information about these devices, including links to directions on how to make improvised air cleaners if you are unable to get a commercial air cleaner.

**When the air outside is dangerous, wear a respirator, not a cloth mask.**

**Wear the right mask to protect yourself from wildfire smoke**

Wildfire smoke has tiny, harmful particles that can damage your lungs and heart if you inhale enough of them.

**Wear an N95 or P100 respirator mask to best protect yourself.** These masks filter out at least 95% (N95) or 99% (P100) of these harmful particles.



**Do not use cloth or surgical masks.** They won't protect you from wildfire smoke because they can't filter out these tiny particles.



