

Wildfire Smoke and Your Health

How to protect yourself and when to consider relocating

If you live in a community that is affected by a wildfire, your immediate concern is likely the threat of the fire. However, for many, the smoke caused by fires can cause serious health problems.

If your community has been placed under an evacuation alert or is dealing with very smoky air, and your health is strongly affected by poor air quality, it is important to have a plan in place to protect your health.

Smoke exposure is particularly a concern for **those who have underlying medical conditions** such as asthma, COPD, heart disease and diabetes. It is also a concern for pregnant women, **infants and the elderly**.

Pay attention to the air quality in your area, and monitor your symptoms regularly. If your symptoms get worse or your health declines and you do not have the appropriate supports available, you may want to consider temporarily relocating to an area with cleaner air. Identify whether you have family or friends in other areas where the air quality may be better and make arrangements to stay with them where possible.

Each person's situation will be unique, so here are some factors to consider when making your plan:

- ▶ What supports are available to you – do you have medical access close by should your health condition decline?
- ▶ Do you have family or friends in your community who can assist you if needed?
- ▶ Do you have access to clean air in your home or can you set up an area in your home to act as a clean air shelter (i.e., a HEPA filtration system)? You can create a clean air shelter in your home by using a portable filtration unit. Portable units must be placed in an appropriately sized room with limited air infiltration from outdoors (i.e., windows and doors closed) and little indoor air pollution (e.g., smoking and other combustion, paint fumes).
- ▶ Is there a building or locations in your community that offers clean air such as a mall, community or recreation centre, or other large building with an air filtration system?
- ▶ Do you have access to food, water and medication?

Communities experiencing high smoke concentrations are encouraged to increase public access to buildings that can serve as clean air shelters.



The wildfire season is expected to continue for several weeks or months. It is important to have a plan in place now so that if the air in your community begins to negatively affect your health, you are able to assess and deal with it quickly.