

Protect Yourself from Wildfire Smoke

This information and more is available on Kaiser Permanente [My Doctor Online](#).

Smoke from wildfires creates unhealthy air. Everyone should follow basic precautions to stay healthy. People who have respiratory conditions such as asthma and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) need to be extra careful.

Basic precautions for wildfire smoke and poor air quality

- Check air quality reports and use common sense. Air quality can change quickly. If it's smoky, avoid outside activities.
- Stay indoors as much as possible. Close doors and windows.
- Wear an N95 mask, called a respirator, if you must be outdoors. This helps protect you from unhealthy air. N95 respirators provide some protection because they filter out fine particles in smoke (but not hazardous gases). Masks must be fitted properly. See the links below on choosing the right one.
- Don't use masks on children. Most masks aren't made for kids because they don't fit properly. They won't protect them from smoke. Masks can also obstruct breathing in babies and young children.
- One-strap paper dust masks or surgical masks do not protect against the fine particles in smoke.
- Don't use bandanas or towels (wet or dry) or tissue held over the mouth and nose. These may relieve dryness but they won't protect your lungs from wildfire smoke.
- Set your car air conditioner to recirculate air instead of drawing in outside air.
- Consider going somewhere with better air quality if you have symptoms from smoke that aren't getting better.
- Have a plan for where you'll get care if needed, if you evacuate or leave the area.

If you have a respiratory condition such as asthma or COPD, smoke can make symptoms worse or cause a flare-up. In addition to the basic precautions above, be sure to:

- Follow your asthma action plan.
- Use your daily asthma and COPD medicines, and any allergy medicine.
- Watch for symptoms, such as wheezing, chest tightness, shortness of breath, or difficulty breathing.

If you have an asthma or COPD flare up:

- Use your daily asthma and COPD medicines, and any allergy medicine.
- Use your quick-relief medicine (albuterol) as needed.
- Try not to panic. Timely treatment at home may help prevent serious breathing problems.

Kaiser Permanente members: call our 24/7 Appointment and Advice line at 866-454-8855 if you're still having symptoms after using your medicine, or you need an urgent refill.

Additional References

- [Air Quality Conditions](#)
- [Wildfire Smoke Factsheet: Reduce Your Smoke Exposure](#)
- [Wildfire Smoke Factsheet: Protecting Children from Wildfire Smoke and Ash](#)
- [Wildfire Smoke Factsheet: Indoor Air Filtration](#)
- [Respirator Infographic](#)
- [Wildfire Smoke Frequently Asked Questions](#)