
Health Recommendations for Wildfire Smoke

Source: National Jewish Health

Smoke can worsen symptoms for those who have pre-existing respiratory conditions, such as asthma, allergies and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD). Typical symptoms may include:

- Difficulty breathing normally
- Cough with or without mucus
- Chest discomfort
- Wheezing and shortness of breath
- Seasonal allergies and increased pollen made worse by smoke
- Particulate matter (PM) - extremely small particles or droplets of pollution in the air are inhaled, making respiratory symptoms worse.

Particulate-laden smoke can also worsen cardiac disease. Inhaled particles trigger the release of chemical messengers into the blood that may increase the risk of blood clots, angina episodes, heart attacks and strokes. People with chronic cardiac conditions are more susceptible to chest pain, heart attacks, cardiac arrhythmias, acute congestive heart failure or stroke.

Even people without lung or cardiac disease may become symptomatic if the smoke is thick enough.

If wildfire smoke is triggering mild symptoms, National Jewish Health doctors recommend:

- Taking your medications as prescribed if you are on medication.
- Using your rescue inhaler if your doctor has recommended one.
- Staying indoors as much as possible.
- Limiting exercise outdoors.
- Considering leaving the area if smoke is making you sick, until the air is clear again.
- Consulting your physician if respiratory or chest symptoms become severe.

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