

Preparing for wildfire smoke events

Some communities across Canada regularly experience wildfire smoke events. This is expected to continue as Canada's changing climate provides ideal conditions for more frequent wildfires and longer wildfire seasons. Wildfire season typically runs from early April to late October.

Who is most at risk of the health effects of wildfire smoke

During heavy smoke conditions, everyone is at risk regardless of their age or health. Some people are more likely to be at risk because they are exposed more frequently to high levels of wildfire smoke. Others are more likely to experience symptoms or health effects when exposed to wildfire smoke.

In general, those who are most at risk of health effects of wildfire smoke are:

- seniors
- Indigenous Peoples
- people living in situations of lower socio economic status such as:
 - those with lower income
 - those with lower education
 - those experiencing housing insecurity
 - those experiencing uncertain employment
- people who smoke
- infants and young children
- people living in rural and remote areas
- pregnant women and pregnant people
- people involved in strenuous outdoor exercise
- people who work outdoors, including wildland firefighters
- people with an existing illness or chronic health conditions, such as:
 - cancer
 - diabetes
 - lung or heart conditions



Find reliable information about air quality conditions

Get up-to-date information about the air quality in your community:

- Air Quality Health Index (AQHI) forecasts
- InfoSmog forecasts for Quebec
- Active weather warnings and air quality advisories
- Wildfire smoke forecast maps
- Download the WeatherCan app for your phone and set notifications to be advised when the AQHI changes
- Online from most provincial and territorial governments

These tools will help you decide whether you should modify your outdoor activities or take other measures to protect your health and the health of others in your care.

If your community is threatened by an approaching wildfire, your local health or emergency authorities will provide direction. Be prepared to evacuate at any time. If told to evacuate, do so immediately.

Prepare yourself for wildfire smoke events

Even if you live in an area with low wildfire risk, you can do many things before the start of wildfire season to prepare yourself. This includes:

- speaking with your doctor or health care provider about how to manage your health during a wildfire smoke event especially if you, or members of your family, are in 1 or more of the groups more likely to be impacted
- maintaining a supply of necessary medications at home and always carry these medications with you during wildfire season. Work with your health care provider to create a plan of what to do in case your medications are unable to stabilize your condition
- knowing the contact information for your local health authority in case you need more information about local cleaner air spaces
- ensuring you have well-fitting NIOSH-certified N95 or equivalent respirators (KN95 or KF94) if you must spend time outdoors



Prepare your home and vehicle for wildfire smoke events

It's important that the air indoors is as clean as possible, especially if you have to stay inside due to wildfire smoke events. You can prepare in advance by:

- properly sealing windows and doors
- replacing or cleaning the air filters in your ventilation system according to the manufacturer's recommendations
- considering purchasing a portable air cleaner, also referred to as air purifiers. These devices can improve indoor air quality by filtering the fine particles from wildfire smoke that can be a risk to your health. There are many models available. It's best to do some research and find an air purifier that's appropriate for the size of the room you plan to use it in.
- having a supply of extra filters for your ventilation system or portable air cleaner(s)



- ensuring you have certified carbon monoxide alarms in your home that are in proper working order
- changing your vehicle's cabin air filter regularly according to the manufacturer's instructions to ensure your filter remains effective

For more information on wildfire smoke and health, visit canada.ca/wildfiresmoke or contact us at air@hc-sc.gc.ca