



# MONOGRAM

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## Wildfire Smoke and Your Health: **What You Should Know and Do**

The dog days of summer have arrived on the Eastside, and wildfire smoke has once again begun to affect our region. Experts predict another challenging wildfire season, and while we can't predict exactly how much smoke we'll experience this summer and fall, it's clear that smoke exposure is now a recurring public health issue—and the risks are real.

TO LEARN MORE, VISIT: [WWW.MONOCOUNTY.CA.GOV](http://WWW.MONOCOUNTY.CA.GOV)

## Health Impacts of Wildfire Smoke

In the short term, exposure to fine particulate matter from wildfire smoke is especially dangerous for people with lung conditions like asthma or COPD. These individuals are more likely to require medical care when smoke blankets our communities. Smoke exposure is also linked to increased heart problems, including heart attacks, hospitalizations, and even deaths. In addition to populations with chronic illnesses, children, older adults, pregnant women, and outdoor workers are more vulnerable to smoke exposure.

### Emerging research points to additional concerns:



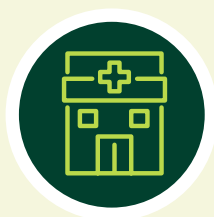
#### Pregnancy Risks:

Studies show exposure to wildfire smoke may pose risks for pregnant people and their unborn children, although evidence is mixed regarding outcomes like preterm birth and low birth weight.



#### Long-Term Effects:

A growing body of evidence suggests prolonged exposure to wildfire smoke may contribute to dementia and heart failure. A study tracking over 1.5 million Southern California Kaiser-Permanente patients for 11 years found a clear link between wildfire smoke exposure and dementia diagnoses. Another long-term study of Medicare recipients estimated that roughly 20,000 Americans develop heart failure each year due to wildfire smoke exposure.



#### Cancer Risk:

Firefighters, who are exposed to different concentrations and types of smoke, are known to be at heightened risk for various cancers. It's still unclear whether repeated community-level exposure raises cancer risks for the general public.

## Practical Steps to Reduce Exposure

While we're still learning about all the health impacts of wildfire smoke, there is enough evidence to justify precautionary measures. Consider the following strategies to help protect yourself and your family:

**Monitor Air Quality:** Stay informed about local air quality and limit outdoor activities when pollution levels are elevated.

**Reduce Physical Activity:** On high-smoke days, avoid strenuous outdoor activities if possible.

**Use Respirator Masks:** When needed, wear an N95 or equivalent mask to reduce inhalation of smoke particles. Free masks are available from Mono County Public Health.

### Improve Indoor Air Quality:

- Stay indoors during high-smoke events (if you're able to keep indoor air quality better than outdoor air).
- Use commercial air cleaners.
- Consider simple DIY air cleaner setups using box fans and filters.
- Retrofit HVAC systems with appropriate filters.

**Employers Take Note:** California requires that employers provide approved respirator masks to employees and enforce their use when air quality worsens to certain thresholds.

## Additional Resources:

### Air Quality Conditions

- [Great Basin Unified Air Pollution Control District](#)
- [EPA AirNow](#)
- [Fire & Smoke Map](#)
- [U.S. Forest Service BlueSky 72-Hour Smoke Forecast](#)

### Improving Indoor Air

- [EPA: Air Cleaners & Filters](#)
- [California Air Resources Board: Tips for Choosing Indoor Air Cleaners](#)
- [How to Create a Clean Room \(YouTube\)](#)
- [AirNow: Indoor Air Filtration Factsheet](#)
- [EPA: DIY Indoor Air Cleaners](#)
- [Attaching a HEPA filter to your swamp cooler may help keep household air cleaner \(the state health department and partners are studying this do-it-yourself approach in the Central Valley\)](#)

### CalOSHA "Worker Protection from Wildfire Smoke"

- [Wildfire smoke emergency standard](#)