

Wildfire Smoke, Extreme Heat, and Your Health

Being exposed to both wildfire smoke and intense heat at the same time can worsen heart and lung diseases and greatly increase the chance of developing serious health conditions like heatstroke. Know the right steps to safeguard your health under these circumstances.

Who's at risk?

While everyone is at risk from the combined effects of wildfire smoke and extreme heat, some people may be at higher risk, including:

- Elderly
- Outdoor workers
- Smokers
- Infants and young children
- Pregnant women
- People with pre-existing illness or chronic health conditions, including:
 - Heart disease
 - Lung conditions (e.g., asthma and COPD)
 - Mental health illness (e.g., schizophrenia)

Symptoms of combined wildfire smoke and heat exposure may include:

1. Mild to moderate symptoms:

- Watery, sore eyes
- Runny nose
- Sore throat
- Headache
- Heat rash
- Extreme thirst
- Muscle cramps
- Excessive sweating
- Nausea or vomiting
- Coughing or wheezing
- Rapid breathing and heartbeat
- Dark urine and reduced frequency

Recommended actions:

- Move to a cool, smoke-free environment and hydrate.
- If your home is too hot and smoky, seek shelter in a local cooling center like a mall, library, or civic building. Contact your local municipal office for information.

2. Severe symptoms:

- Chest pain
- Difficulty breathing
- Dizziness or fainting
- High body temperature
- Confusion or lack of coordination
- Hot, red skin but no sweating

Recommended actions:

- This may be a medical emergency. Conditions such as a heart attack or heat stroke may be occurring. Call 911 for medical assistance.
- While waiting for help, move to a cooler environment and apply cold water to large areas of your skin. For example, use ice packs, and/or drape yourself with a cool, damp sheet.

Individuals experiencing symptoms can call the Saskatchewan Health Authority HealthLine at 811 to speak to a registered nurse. HealthLine is available 24 hours a day.

Reduce your risk!

- Stay alert and prepared. Be aware of your community's emergency protocols and proactive safety measures.
- Engage in hazard mitigation planning to reduce heat exposure such as infrastructure enhancements, which may include the installation of outdoor shades, green roofs, and cool pavement technologies.
- Maintain indoor air quality by keeping windows and doors shut and set air conditioning systems to 'recirculate mode'.
- Use the highest-quality air filter compatible with the air conditioning system. Consider a portable air purifier with a HEPA filter, particularly for vulnerable individuals. Remember:
 - Select a purifier with an appropriate Clean Air Delivery Rate (CADR) for your space.
 - Operate the purifier continuously for optimal effectiveness.
 - Do not use units that generate ozone.
 - A DIY air cleaner may be a good option. Refer to the Government of Saskatchewan [Indoor Air Quality and Ventilation webpage](#) for more details.
- Limit outdoor activities. Properly fitted N95 respirators will provide some protection, but they will not protect against all fire pollutants. Dust masks, bandanas, or cloth masks are not effective.
- Drink plenty of water and look out for others. Check in on neighbours, friends, and family.

Wildfire smoke and extreme heat risks do not always happen at the same time. For detailed guidance on each, see the ['Forest Fire Smoke and Your Health'](#) fact sheet and the [Extreme Heat Events webpage](#).

Numerous resources are available for preparation and response to wildfire smoke and extreme heat events, including:

- The Saskatchewan Public Safety Agency is responsible for provincial emergency management, fire safety, and wildfire management in Saskatchewan. For live air quality updates visit: <https://www.saskpublicsafety.ca>
- Get the [SaskAlert app](#). Saskatchewan's emergency public alerting program alerts the public of an emergency in real time.
- Download the free [WeatherCAN](#) app to be notified of heat alerts.
- Visit [Government of Canada](#) for more information and resources on wildfire smoke, air quality, and your health.

