

STAY SAFE WHEN IT'S SMOKY

Breathing wildfire smoke is dangerous.

Keep yourself and others safe with these important tips.

Check the air.

- Go to [AirNow.gov \(https://www.airnow.gov\)](https://www.airnow.gov) or use the [AirNow mobile app \(https://www.airnow.gov/airnow-mobile-app\)](https://www.airnow.gov/airnow-mobile-app) to check current and upcoming air quality conditions so you can plan ahead.

Know your risk.

- Breathing wildfire smoke is harmful to everyone, but people in sensitive groups are at higher risk and should take extra steps to protect themselves.
- Sensitive groups include all children; adults age 65 and older; pregnant people; and those with diabetes or heart and lung conditions.
- Wildfire smoke damage is cumulative. Some people might not feel the effects after one day of exposure, but repeated exposure can lead to serious long-term health problems.

Know the colors.

- Learn what each [Air Quality Index or AQI \(https://www.airnow.gov/aqi-and-health\)](https://www.airnow.gov/aqi-and-health) color means so you can protect yourself and those you care for.

Stay indoors.

- When possible, stay indoors with windows and doors closed, and filter the air.
- Run your air conditioning on recirculate with the fresh-air intake closed, and use a [MERV 13 rated filter or higher \(https://www.epa.gov/indoor-air-quality-iaq/what-merv-rating\)](https://www.epa.gov/indoor-air-quality-iaq/what-merv-rating) in your heating, ventilating, and air conditioning (HVAC) system. Check the filter at least every month during heavy use and more often during wildfire smoke.
- Use a portable HEPA (high efficiency particulate air) air cleaner, or build a simple [Corsi-Rosenthal Box \(https://corsirosenthalfoundation.org/instructions\)](https://corsirosenthalfoundation.org/instructions) using a box fan, duct tape, and filters.
- Go to an air-conditioned public space like a library or community center.
- Avoid activities that create indoor air pollution, such as smoking, vaping, frying or broiling food, using gas, propane, or wood-burning stoves and furnaces, and vacuuming (unless you use a vacuum with a HEPA filter).

Be safe outdoors.

- If you must go outside when air quality is unhealthy, try to limit or reduce outdoor activity – especially exercise – and take it easy.
- Adjust activities as needed to help children stay active while protecting their health. Find more information here: [Minnesota Outdoor Air Quality Guidance for Schools and Child Care \(https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/asthma/schools/outdoorair.html\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/asthma/schools/outdoorair.html).
- Wearing a well-fitted N95 or KN95 mask can help block smoke particles. Dust, cloth, and surgical masks do not protect against these particles.
- Take breaks in clean-air spaces.
- In your car, close windows and set the ventilation to recirculate.

Prepare for bad air.

- Have a backup indoor location or an alternate date for outdoor events in case of poor air quality.

Take care of yourself and others.

- Take it easy and pay attention to how you and others feel.
- Watch for symptoms and monitor any changes in your breathing or overall health.
- Check on neighbors, especially older adults and people who live alone.
- When deciding whether to spend time outdoors on bad air days, consider whether anyone involved is part of a sensitive group, and make the choice that best protects their health.
- If you have asthma or other breathing conditions, such as chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), keep your quick relief inhaler with you when air quality is poor, make sure it isn't expired, and follow your medical or asthma action plan.

Seek medical care if you experience difficulty breathing, chest pain, a persistent cough or sneezing, or dizziness or confusion.