



Kids & Wildfire Smoke



What's the problem?

Wildfire smoke contains small particulate matter called PM 2.5. These microscopic particles can easily get into our lungs or even enter our bloodstream. This is unhealthy, especially for sensitive young people. It's important to understand just how unhealthy the air is on any smoky day.

Who is at risk?

Because lungs are developing, babies, children (especially under five), and pregnant women are particularly sensitive. Kids also tend to be more active and breathe in more PM 2.5. Anyone with asthma or other lung diseases have added health risk when it's smoky. With small children, asthma may not yet be observable or diagnosed.

What do children experience?

Coughing, trouble breathing, stinging eyes, running nose, scratchy throat, headaches, fast heartbeat, exhaustion, and grumpiness. Kids are more susceptible to respiratory illnesses, and smoke can trigger symptoms of asthma.

When the smoke rolls into our valley it affects all of us. With a changing climate, wildfire season is longer and fires are occurring at a higher frequency and intensity. While we don't have control over smoke, there are things we can do to stay healthy.



What should my family do?

- Limit time and activity level outside.
- Head indoors and tighten up your residence. Keep windows and doors closed.
- Purchase a right-sized HEPA room air filtration unit with < PM2.5 (especially good for a room where an at-risk individual sleeps), locally or online (\$100-\$180 depending on room size).
- If you have A/C, turn on recirculate (and check the filters to make sure they are clean).
- Visit and enjoy a "clean air respite" location – generally a place with air conditioning. Could be a museum, movie theater, the library, or more. For a map of these locations, see climatesmartmissoula.org
- Check in on families, friends and neighbors who may be particularly vulnerable.

What should we *not* do?

- Be super active outdoors. This may not be the day to hike, bike, run around, or play sports.
- Rely on a bandana or single string dust mask. N95 2-string masks can help, but they are difficult to fit and make breathing harder.
- Add more particulate matter to your home by burning anything (candles, cigarettes, incense) or adding via vacuuming or even some cooking.
- Be in despair! The smoke will clear and the skies will be blue and bright again soon...

How do I know when the air is unhealthy or hazardous?

3 ways to find out:



LOOK outside

- Here are the visibility rules
- o Cannot see 5 miles?
Unhealthy
 - o Cannot see 2 miles?
Very Unhealthy
 - o Cannot see 1 mile?
Hazardous



CHECK Today's Air

Go to: todaysair.mt.gov



CALL

The Missoula area Air Quality Hotline:
406-258-3600



For more info: climatesmartmissoula.org; info@climatesmartmissoula.org

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