



# Asthma and Wildfire Smoke

When the smoke rolls into our valley it affects all of us. **Anyone with asthma, other lung diseases, or heart conditions has an added health risk when it's smoky.** With small children, asthma may not yet be observable or diagnosed. Kids are more susceptible to respiratory illnesses, and those with asthma are particularly vulnerable. We don't have control over wildfire smoke, but there are things we can do to stay healthy (see over).

## What's the problem?

Wildfire smoke contains small particulate matter called PM2.5, which can get into our lungs and bloodstream. This can trigger symptoms such as coughing, trouble breathing, stinging eyes, running nose, scratchy throat, and headaches. People with asthma may experience more frequent and more severe asthma attacks.



## Wildfire Smoke and COVID-19

While the outdoors is generally safer for reducing your chances of catching COVID-19, the air outside may not be safe to breathe during a wildfire smoke event. In addition, exposure to **wildfire smoke has the potential to exacerbate COVID-19 symptoms and lead to worse health outcomes. Cloth face coverings do not provide protection from wildfire smoke.** Only respirators such as N95s can filter out PM 2.5, so instead of relying on your face covering for protection, go indoors to a place with cleaner air.

## Stay Informed with Air Quality Updates

-  Check today's air at [todaysair.mt.gov](https://todaysair.mt.gov)
-  Call the Missoula air quality hotline at **406-258-3600**
-  Know the visibility "rules of thumb"  
 Cannot see 5 miles: **Unhealthy**  
 Cannot see 2 miles: **Very unhealthy**  
 Cannot see 1 mile: **Hazardous**



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### What can I **do** to stay healthy?

- Limit time and activity level outside
- Keep windows and doors closed (if not too hot!)
- Purchase one or more HEPA Portable Air Cleaners (PACs).
- Make a DIY PAC with a fan + filter!
- If you have A/C, turn on recirculate and clean your filters.
- If you have access, upgrade your HVAC filter to the best one your system can handle.
- Take medications as directed and monitor symptoms. If symptoms worsen, see your healthcare provider.
- Create or update an Asthma Action Plan.
- Stay informed on current air quality and get outside when it's healthy!

### What can I **avoid** to stay healthy?

- Be super active outdoors. With unhealthy or hazardous air, it's not the time to run, bike, or play hard outdoors.
- Rely on a cloth mask, bandana or single string dust mask. N95 2-string masks can help, but they are difficult to fit and make breathing harder.
- Burning things like candles, cigarettes, or incense, which add particulate matter to your home
- Vacuuming regularly.
- Be in despair! The smoke will clear and the skies will be blue and bright again soon...

Learn More and Connect:  
[www.montanawildfiresmoke.org](http://www.montanawildfiresmoke.org)



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