

Not everyone who is exposed to smoke will have health problems. In fact, most healthy adults and children will recover quickly from smoke exposure and will not suffer long-term consequences. Still children, and individuals with asthma or other respiratory problems are at increased risk of the having symptoms of smoke exposure.

Here are some specific strategies to reduce smoke exposure:

- **Stay inside.** Staying inside with the doors and windows closed can usually reduce exposure to ambient air pollution by about a third or more. When air quality improves, even temporarily, you should “air out” your homes to reduce indoor air pollution.
- **Reduce physical activity.** This is an effective strategy to lower the dose of inhaled air pollutants and reduce health risks during a smoke event. During exercise, people can increase their air intake as much as 10 to 20 times over their resting level.
- **Use air conditioning and HEPA filters.** This likely has less impact than the first two strategies, but can help to re-circulate indoor air and remove particulate matter.
- **Drink plenty of fluids** to keep your respiratory membranes moist.
- Humidifiers are not air cleaners, and will not significantly reduce the amount of particles in the air during a smoke event. Nor will they remove gases like carbon monoxide. However, humidifiers and dehumidifiers (depending on the environment) may slightly reduce pollutants through condensation, and help mucous membranes remain comfortably moist, which may reduce eye and airway irritation.

Respirators (like N95 masks) are typically not needed and should only be used after first implementing other, more effective methods of exposure reduction, including staying indoors, reducing activity, and using HEPA air cleaners to reduce overall smoke exposure. A surgical mask, which is designed to capture infectious particles, is not a respirator and provides little or no protection from smoke particles.

Here are some good resources:

To check the air qualities in your area go to: <https://airnow.gov/>

https://www3.epa.gov/airnow/air-quality-guide_pm_2015.pdf

<https://www.arb.ca.gov/carpa/toolkit/data-to-mes/wildfire-smoke-guide.pdf>

<https://www.aap.org/en-us/advocacy-and-policy/aap-health-initiatives/Children-and-Disasters/Pages/Wildfires.aspx>