

Six things you can do to keep safe from bushfire smoke

January 6 2020, by James Giggacher



Credit: Lannon Harley

For the second time this week, Canberra is the world's worst city for air pollution as it is blanketed by smoke and hazardous haze from the ongoing bushfire crisis.

Here's six ways you can deal with and protect yourself from bushfire smoke as recommend by ANU professor Sotiris Vardoulakis—one of

the world's leading experts on [air quality](#) and health.

1. Stay indoors

Create a clean air space in your home, close doors and windows (fill gaps with towels/tape), use [air conditioning](#) (not evaporative coolers) on recirculate mode, use air purifier with HEPA filter.

2. Avoid strenuous physical activity outdoors

Don't go for your usual jog. Go to the gym or an indoor swimming pool. Visit air-conditioned libraries, cinema, shopping centers. Time your activities in a way that reduces your exposure to smoke. Go for a walk when air quality is better.

3. Medication

Those with heart/lung conditions are more sensitive to smoke. Keep sufficient supplies of your regular medication. Follow your asthma/medical plan (keep your inhaler with you). Talk to your doctor if you feel unwell, before making changes to your medical plan.

4. Facemasks

Use P2/N95 professional facemask if you have to be outdoors. Fit them tightly around mouth & nose. Replace mask when it becomes dirty/moist. Remove mask if you feel faint/unwell. Surgical [masks](#) offer little protection. There are no professional masks for kids.

5. Trust your senses

When you smell/see smoke, [air pollution](#) is *hazardous*. If you have itchy

eyes, cough, running nose reduce activities, stay indoors, take lozenges/eye drops. If you feel difficulty breathing, wheezing, tight chest seek urgent medical attention / call 000.

6. Keep well & follow news/advice

Stay away from the heat and smoke, keep well hydrated, eat plenty of fruits and veggies (don't eat junk). Most importantly quit [smoking](#). Antioxidant supplements (vitamin C & E) may help. Follow [local news](#) /advice, including [ACT Health](#), [ACT Emergency Services Agency](#) and [ACT Rural Fire Service](#).

Provided by Australian National University

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