

How to stay healthy as smoke spreads from Canada wildfires

June 29 2023, by Maddie Burakoff



People look at the Statue of Liberty and the hazy New York City skyline from Bayonne, N.J., Thursday, June 29, 2023. Forecasters say the only break much of America can hope for anytime soon from eye-watering dangerous smoke from fire-struck Canada is brief bouts of shirt-soaking sweltering heat and humidity from a southern heat wave that has already proven deadly. Credit: AP Photo/Seth Wenig

Massive fires are burning up stretches of Canadian forests and [sending plumes of smoke](#) into the U.S.

As a haze stretches over parts of the U.S., [health authorities](#) have raised the alarm about poor air quality.

Here's how you can protect your health from the smoky haze.

STAY INDOORS

The [small particles](#) in wildfire smoke can irritate the eyes, nose and throat, and can affect the heart and lungs, making it harder to breathe. It's important to limit [outdoor activities](#) as much as possible to avoid breathing in these particles, health agencies say. You should especially avoid strenuous activities like going for a run, since heavy breathing will increase the amount of smoke you inhale. And bring pets inside too: Animals are also affected by smoky conditions.

KEEP INSIDE AIR CLEAN

When inside, keep doors, windows and fireplaces shut so that smoke stays out. If you have a portable air purifier or HVAC system, run it to help keep the air clean, the Environmental Protection Agency recommends. Check that your filters are high quality and up to date. Make sure any filters or [air conditioners](#) are set to recirculate indoor air to avoid bringing in smoke from outside. If you have a window air conditioner, check that it's sealed to the window as tightly as possible. And try to avoid activities that would add more particles to the air in your home—like smoking, burning candles or frying meat.



Tourists on Segways visit the Lincoln Memorial while the sky is hazy with smoke from wildfires in Canada, obscuring the view of the Capitol and other buildings along the National Mall almost completely past the Washington Monument, Thursday, June 29, 2023, in Washington. Credit: AP Photo/Jacquelyn Martin

WEAR A MASK

If you go outside in smoky conditions, consider wearing a mask, like an N95, to protect your lungs. [The mask should fit over your nose and under your chin.](#) and seal tightly to your face to keep out the smoky air.

KNOW YOUR RISK

Some groups should be extra careful as they face higher risks from wildfire smoke. Children and [older adults](#) are especially sensitive to smoky conditions. Those with health conditions affecting the lungs or heart—like asthma or [chronic obstructive pulmonary disease](#)—face higher risks from [poor air quality](#), along with those who are pregnant, according to the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#). People in these groups should take extra precautions and monitor for symptoms like coughing, trouble breathing or fatigue.

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