



## 2023 Health Alert #9: Guidance During Wildfire Smoke

*Please distribute to all clinical staff in emergency medicine, family medicine, geriatrics, internal medicine, pediatrics, psychiatry, pharmacy, and primary care.*

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June 7, 2023

Dear Colleagues,

Smoke from wildfires in Canada is continuing to impact New York City air quality. The conditions are changing in real time as we experience this event. Everyone should monitor news alerts for updates. Wildfire smoke can irritate the eyes, nose, throat, and lungs.

Groups that may be more sensitive to wildfire smoke include:

- Infants and Children
- Older Adults
- Pregnant Women
- People with Lung Conditions
- People with Heart Conditions
- People with Social Vulnerabilities, such as lack of access to safe housing or health care, lack of transportation, and other factors

Consider reaching out to high-risk patients who fall into these vulnerable categories to provide the preventative guidance below and advise them to consult with you or the provider following those health conditions if they have questions or feel ill.

There are effective steps patients can take to reduce the effects of wildfire smoke:

- Stay indoors and limit time spent outdoors.
- Reduce physical activity when air quality is in the unhealthy range.
- Keep windows closed.
- Use an air purifier if you have one and set it at the highest level
- If you use an AC, close the fresh air intake, and set it to recirculate to avoid bringing in smokey air.
- All New Yorkers should wear a high-quality mask (e.g., N95 or KN95) when outside, especially if you are an older adult or have heart breathing problems.
- Monitor changing air quality conditions on the EPA Air Now Site at: <https://www.airnow.gov/>

Also of note:

- Most [healthy people](#) will recover quickly from wildfire smoke exposure and will not suffer long-term health consequences.
- Exposure to particulate matter (PM) is currently the principal known public health threat from wildfire smoke. Fine particles from smoke and coarse particles from ash are respiratory irritants that can cause coughing, wheezing, and difficulty breathing.

- The epidemiological data linking wildfire smoke exposure to cardiovascular morbidity and mortality have been mixed, although several recent studies identified elevated risks of specific health outcomes, including emergency department visits for ischemic heart disease, dysrhythmia, heart failure, pulmonary embolism, and stroke.
- Encourage your patients to sign up for [Notify NYC](#) messages from the City of New York City to receive updates and alerts.
- This is a rare occurrence for New York City, please refer to the following resources for further information
  - <https://www.epa.gov/air-research/clinical-outcomes-related-particulate-matter-exposure-and-cardiovascular-disease>
  - <https://www.americares.org/what-we-do/community-health/climate-resilient-health-clinics/#toolkit>

Thank you for your help in keeping New Yorkers healthy and safe.

Sincerely,

*Carolyn Olson*

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Bureau of Environmental Surveillance and Policy

*Michelle Morse*

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