



Protect Yourself and Your Family from Debris Smoke

Natural disasters, such as hurricanes and floods, can leave a lot of debris. Some of this debris may be burned during cleanup. Smoke from these outdoor fires is unhealthy for you to breathe.

Smoke may cause you to cough. It can cause shortness of breath or tightness in the chest. It also can sting your eyes, nose, or throat.

These problems can begin a very short time after you breathe the smoke. You may have little warning, especially if you have lung or heart disease. Infants, children, pregnant women, older adults, and people with chronic diseases such as asthma are at greater risk from smoke.

Check with your local health and safety officials to find out when fires are planned in your area. If you smell or see smoke, or know that fires are nearby, you can take the following steps to protect yourself and your family:

- Leave the area if you are at greater risk from breathing smoke.
- Limit your exposure to smoke outdoors and indoors.
- Stay inside and use your air conditioner. If you do not have an air conditioner or smoke is likely to get inside your house, leave the area until the smoke is completely gone.
- Avoid activities that put extra demands on your lungs and heart. These include exercising or physical chores, both outdoors and indoors.
- Make sure you take all your medications according to the doctor's directions. Contact your doctor if your health gets worse.
- Dust masks, bandanas, or other cloths (even if wet) will not protect you from smoke.