

For Immediate Release | July 19, 2018

Take precautions when skies are smoky

OKANAGAN – Several wildfires are creating smoky skies across Okanagan communities and residents living in close vicinity to a fire are reminded to take precautions to protect their lung health.

Wildfires are a regular part of summer in British Columbia. With wildfires comes the potential for wildfire smoke pollution in and around communities across the Interior. The best way to deal with smoke pollution is to be prepared and take measures to reduce your exposure to smoke.

Smoke affects each person differently, based on his or her health, age and exposure. Smoke exposure can be particularly concerning for infants, the elderly and those who have underlying medical conditions such as asthma, diabetes, and lung (asthma/COPD) or heart disease as well as pregnant women.

The following can reduce the health risks associated with wildfire smoke:

- Reduce outdoor activity on smoky days.
- Find a clean air shelter such as large public buildings like libraries, community centres and shopping malls as they often have cleaner, cooler air than smaller buildings or the outdoors.
- Consider purchasing a commercially available HEPA (high efficiency particulate air) filter and creating a filtered air room in your house.
- Travel to areas with better air quality – conditions can greatly vary across geographic areas and elevations.
- People with asthma or other chronic illness should activate their asthma or personal care plan.
- Pay attention to local air quality reports and the conditions around you as smoke concentrations may vary and change over short periods and over small distances. A heavy bluish-white haze, possibly accompanied by the smell of smoke, is an indication smoke concentrations are higher than usual. Check the [Air Quality Health Index](#) in your area.

For general information about smoke and your health, contact HealthLinkBC toll free, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week at 8-1-1.

Interior Health is committed to promoting healthy lifestyles and providing a wide range of quality health-care services to more than 740,000 people living across B.C.'s vast interior. For more information, visit www.interiorhealth.ca, follow us on Twitter [@Interior_Health](https://twitter.com/Interior_Health), or like us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/InteriorHealth.