

For Immediate Release | Sept. 13, 2020

Smoky skies from Western U.S. fires reach into IH communities

Wildfires burning in the Western United States are causing higher than normal smoke pollution in many areas of Interior Health.

Smoke can worsen symptoms for those who have pre-existing respiratory conditions, such as asthma, allergies and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD). Typical symptoms may include:

- Difficulty breathing
- Chest pain and discomfort
- Coughing
- Irritated eyes, nose, and throat

Smoke can also worsen cardiac disease. Inhaled particles trigger the release of chemical messengers into the blood that may increase the risk of blood clots, angina episodes, heart attacks and strokes. People with chronic cardiac conditions are more susceptible to chest pain, heart attacks, cardiac arrhythmias, acute congestive heart failure or stroke.

If wildfire smoke is triggering mild symptoms individuals should take medications as prescribed and use a rescue inhaler if one has been prescribed. You should not take more medication, or take it more often than prescribed.

If you are near the fires where smoke or particulates are significant, or the smoke is making them sick, consider leaving the area until the air is clear again.

People should stay indoors as much as possible, and close windows if they can.

Limit or eliminate outdoor exercise until the air clears.

Interior Health is also advising schools to:

- Ensure students are situated appropriately apart.
- Keep classroom windows closed.
- Encourage students to wear closely fitted masks, which will provide some protection.
- Restrict outdoor physical education and limit indoor physical education to lower intensity activity,

If you are experiencing symptoms and are concerned, contact your health care provider or walk-in clinic. If your symptoms are severe, seek emergency medical attention.

For additional general information about wildfire smoke and your health:

BC Centre for Disease Control, [Wildfire Smoke](#)

For additional general information about wildfire smoke and air quality:

- [Current Air Quality Health Index \(AQHI\) and air quality measurements](#)
- [Environment and Climate Change Canada FireWork Prediction System](#)
- [Blue Sky Canada Smoke Forecasting System](#)

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