

Human Exposure to Wildfire Smoke

Know your air quality

- Use AirNow [interactive map](#) to see up-to-date information on the air quality where you are
- Check local [air quality advisories](#) for NW Oregon – Willamette Valley

Concerns about poor air quality

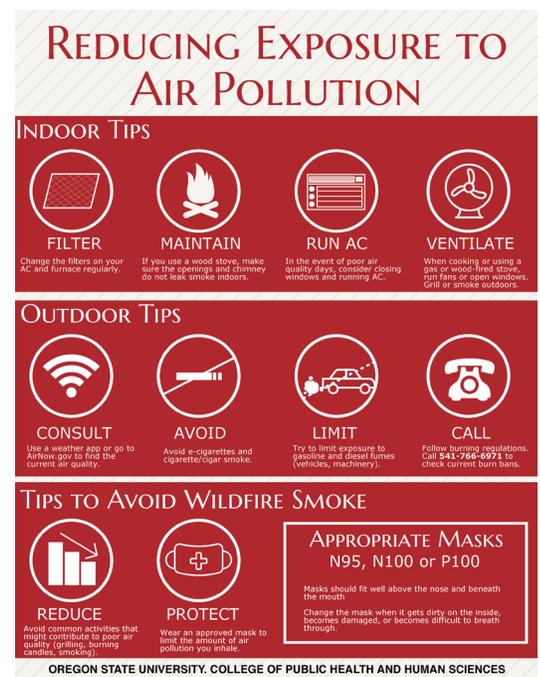
- A mixture of gases and particulates from wildfire smoke can cause health issues
- Smoke can irritate your eyes, throat and lungs and can worsen heart and lung disease
- Immediate health impacts may include coughing, difficulty breathing, scratchy throat, irritated sinuses, headaches, increased heart rate, runny nose and tiredness

Food from the garden

- If your garden was not burnt, produce should be inspected and washed, outer leaves should be discarded, and root vegetables should be peeled prior to consumption
- Produce can be soaked in 10% white vinegar (by volume) to remove ash
- Wash your hands and face with soap and water after working in the garden/farm
- Wash gardening clothes after use and leave shoes outdoors

Ways to reduce your exposure

- Stay indoors and keep your air as clean as possible
- Shut windows and doors
- If your home has central air turn it to ‘recirculate mode’
- Install a MERV-13 rated air filter into your central air duct system (which can be purchased online from suppliers like Grainger.com)
- Use a portable HEPA air cleaner (a list of effective air cleaners can be found at <https://www.epa.gov/indoor-air-quality-iaq>). These are most effective for smaller spaces such as bedrooms.
- If you have an air conditioner, you can use it
- If your home does not have central air you can make an air filter using a fan and MERV-13 filter but make sure the fan is sufficiently powered (Instructional video on “[How to make your own clean air fan](#)” from Washington Department of Ecology)
- Use a door mat and take shoes off when entering your home to avoid tracking ash indoors
- Avoid stirring up particles in your home: don’t burn candles or fireplace, minimize vacuuming, and avoid smoking
- Smoke and ash will get into your home. Use damp mopping and damp cloths to dust to remove these residues to prevent them from being resuspended indoors. If you have carpet, it is best to use a vacuum with a HEPA filter (is possible) and open the windows when the air quality improves.



- While most masks will effectively trap large particles, an “N95” or a “KN95” mask will offer some protection, while other masks will effectively trap larger particles but not the smoke. If your mask has a valve, you will need to tape over the valve or place a cloth mask over the N95 to ensure the mask is protective against COVID-19.
- If you are going to clean up ash outside, do not use a leaf blower because this will just resuspend the particles. Instead, use a broom and sweep the paths that you or your pets use. This will prevent you from tracking the particles into your home.

Additional resources

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention – [Wildfire Smoke](#)
- [Oregon Wildfire Resources](#)
- Oregon Health Authority – [Frequently Asked Questions about Wildfire Smoke and Public Health](#)
- Oregon State Extension Service – [Tips on Improving Indoor Air Quality](#)
- OSU Western Regional Center to Enhance Food Safety – [Food Safety and Wildfires](#)
- UCCE – [Produce Safety after Urban Wildfire](#)