

RWBAHC Offers Protective Actions to take against Inhalation of Wildfire Smoke

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Everyone is aware of the massive amount of smoke discharged into our local atmosphere over the past twelve days from the Monument and Antelope fires. Smoke from wildfires is a mixture of gases and small particles from burning trees and other plant materials. It can hurt your eyes, irritate you respiratory system, and worsen chronic heart and lung diseases. The main concern for your health is from the small particles that can cause coughing, scratchy throat, irritated sinuses, shortness of breath, chest pain, headaches, stinging eyes, a runny nose, and asthma exacerbations.

Smoke can make symptoms worse for some people who have heart or lung disease. People who have heart disease may experience more serious symptoms such as chest pain, rapid heartbeat, shortness of breath, and fatigue. Smoke may also worsen symptoms for people with pre-existing conditions such as respiratory allergies, asthma, and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease.

The Preventive Medicine Department at RWBAHC offers several important recommendations to help protect you and your family from wildfire smoke while we work together on this crisis affecting our community.

10+	0-50	Good	None
5-10	51-100	Moderate	Unusually sensitive people should consider reducing prolonged or heavy exertion.
3-5	101-150	Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups	People with heart or lung disease, older adults, and children should reduce prolonged or heavy exertion.
1.5-3	151-200	Unhealthy	People with heart or lung disease, older adults, and children should avoid prolonged or heavy exertion. Everyone else should reduce prolonged or heavy exertion.
1-1.5	201-300	Very Unhealthy	People with heart or lung disease, older adults, and children should avoid all physical activity outdoors. Everyone else should avoid prolonged or heavy exertion.
1 or less	301-500	Hazardous	Everyone should avoid all physical activity outdoors. People with heart or lung disease, older adults, and children should remain indoors and keep activity levels low.

Pay attention to local air quality reports. RWBAHC and Sierra Vista have initiated particulate matter monitoring which is part of Air Quality Index (AQI) monitoring. Results will be distributed through the Installation Operations Center and posted on the RWBAHC website and on the RWBAHC marquee. Additionally, the Tucson Department of Environmental Quality website has AQI posted for all monitored areas of Arizona <http://www.airinfnow.org/>. In the absence of air quality index reports, refer to the visibility guide in the ADEQ “What to Do During a Fire” brochure posted on the Fort Huachuca Facebook page for additional health effects and recommended actions. <http://www.airinfnow.org/>

If you are advised to stay indoors, keep your windows and doors closed. Run an air conditioner if you have one but keep the fresh-air intake closed and the filter clean to prevent outdoor smoke from getting inside.

Don't add to indoor air pollution. Don't use anything that burns, even candles. Don't vacuum or smoke as these activities put more pollution in the air.

Follow your doctor's advice about medicines and about your respiratory management plan if you have asthma or another lung disease. Call your doctor if your symptoms worsen.

Most importantly, use common sense. If it looks smoky outside, it is probably not a good time for outdoor activities such as jogging or working outdoors.

RWBAHC is available to assist with your health concerns related to smoke inhalation, anxiety, behavioral health, medication issues, and appointments. Numbers to call are (all numbers are 520 area code): Nurse Triage Line (during clinic hours) 533-9200 option #3, Nurse Advice Line (after clinic hours) 533-9200 option #5, Weekend/Holiday Access Clinic (WHAC) 533-9165, Beneficiation Counseling and Assistance Coordinator (BCAC) 533-1204, High Desert Clinic Urgent Care Center 459-8915, and Arizona Family Care Associates (AFCA) Urgent Care Center 458-9644. You can utilize www.tricareonline.com or contact TriWest at 1-888-9378 or www.triwest.com.

For additional information about air quality reports, please contact MAJ Kathy Babin, Environmental Science Officer, RWBAHC Preventive Medicine at 533-3959.