

## WHAT IF YOU WORK OR PLAY OUTSIDE?

- Reduce activity levels. With heavy exertion you breathe deeper and inhale more smoke.
- Take frequent breaks in an indoor area with clean air.
- Consider using an N95 respirator (below).
- Be sure to get respite at night - in clean indoor air!
- If you have asthma, have your inhaler on-hand and follow your asthma plan.
- Seek medical attention if you experience severe symptoms.

## WHAT ABOUT RESPIRATORS?

Only respirators such as N95s can filter out the fine particles in the smoke. Cloth masks don't work! If you must be outside, consider using an N95 or KN95 respirator and make sure it seals close to your face. Good fitting N95s are hard to find for children, and facial hair can make it difficult to create a good seal. If you have difficulty breathing through the respirator, do not use it.

### N95 Respirator Basics:

- Double strings: 1 above ear, 1 below
- Pinch at nose
- Labeled NIOSH + N95 or P100
- Mask should collapse as you breathe in and not let air in the sides.



## AIR QUALITY CAN CHANGE HOURLY - CHECK FOR UPDATES

Check Today's Air:  
[Fire.AirNow.gov](https://www.fire.airnow.gov)



Call the Missoula Air Quality Hotline:  
**406-258-3600**

Know the visibility "rules of thumb"

- Cannot see **5 miles: Unhealthy**
- Cannot see **2 miles: Very unhealthy**
- Cannot see **1 mile: Hazardous**

## WE'RE IN THIS TOGETHER

Check in on friends and neighbors. Are they able to stay healthy? Consider buying a HEPA PAC or DIY fan/filter for someone in need. Climate Smart Missoula has a "Pay It Forward" donation program via our website below.

Our website has more on health risks, what you can do, links to nifty real-time maps showing where the fires are and where the smoke is coming from & headed, plus more.

Together, let's build a **Climate Ready Missoula**.

[MontanaWildfireSmoke.org](https://MontanaWildfireSmoke.org)

With partners:



# IT'S TIME TO BE WILDFIRE SMOKE READY

When the smoke rolls into our valley it affects all of us. Climate change is bringing longer, more intense wildfire seasons. Yet there *are* things we can do to stay healthy.

And don't despair. The smoke will clear, and the skies will be blue and bright again soon!



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# WILDFIRE SMOKE & HEALTH

Wildfire smoke pollutants are many. We're most concerned with fine particulate matter (PM2.5).

- These tiny particles can burrow deep into your lungs and even pass into your bloodstream where they set off an inflammatory response.
- They cause more frequent and severe asthma attacks, worsened COPD symptoms, increased risk of heart attack and strokes, increased susceptibility to infectious disease, reduced lung function, increased hospitalizations, and more.
- Children, pregnant people, seniors, those with heart or lung disease, and people with higher exposure (e.g., outdoor workers, low-income) are most at risk.
- Even if you are not in a high-risk category, wildfire smoke is bad for you, and the longer you're in it, the worse it gets.
- When you breathe in smoke, you may experience coughing, trouble breathing, stinging eyes, running nose, scratchy throat, headaches, irregular heartbeat, exhaustion, or grumpiness. Don't despair -- keep reading!

## ADJUST BEHAVIOR

We can't control when the smoke arrives or how long it stays, yet there ARE things we can do to reduce exposure and its unhealthy effects, like:

- Limit intensity + duration of outside activities
- Head indoors, close windows and doors, and create clean air (next section)
- Avoid adding particulate matter to your home: don't burn things like candles, cigarettes, or incense, and avoid or limit vacuuming and stove-top cooking.

**PETS** Our furry friends are also sensitive to wildfire smoke. Bring them inside more often & curtail their exercise.

## CREATE CLEAN INDOOR AIR at home or work

### Buy a HEPA Portable Air Cleaner (PAC).

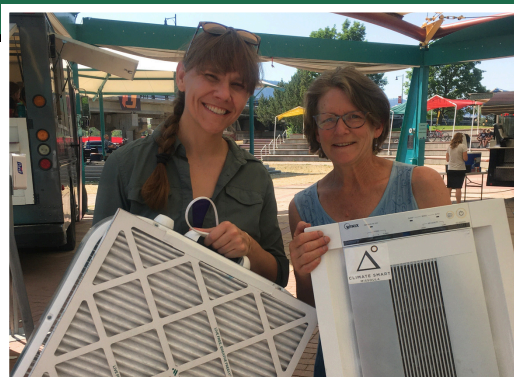
- HEPA PACs remove PM2.5 from indoor air.
- They cost ~\$100-\$200.
- Get a PAC sized for the room it's in.
- Place it in a room where you spend a lot of time (like a bedroom). Close the doors and windows in that room so air can circulate through the filter. Keep the PAC on the highest fan speed you can tolerate when smoke is present.
- Consider more than one PAC for different rooms (or move it around).

### Purchase additional filters for your PAC

- They do get dirty! Order online and know 'off brand' filters can work if the correct size.

### Make a DIY box fan/filter air cleaner

- High efficiency filters (MERV 13) can be bought at hardware stores or online and easily attached to a box fan. These fan/filters are louder than HEPA PACs, but lower cost and nearly as efficient. Use a newer fan (2012 or after). See our website for simple directions + safety guidance.



LEARN MORE AND PREPARE:  
[MONTANAWILDFIRESMOKE.ORG](http://MONTANAWILDFIRESMOKE.ORG)

## INDOORS FORCED AIR SYSTEMS

A few basics. See our website for more.

### Running your forced air system

- Keep the furnace fan on (i.e., uncouple it from the thermostat) for continuous cleaning.

### Upgrade your HVAC filter

- Use the highest efficiency filter your system can handle. A MERV 13 or better is best, but MERV 11 or 12 will still help clean the air. Keep extra filters on hand and change them when they get dirty.
- If your air handler cannot use a better filter, use PACs or DIY combos to clean individual rooms.

## HOT & SMOKY?

It is very important to avoid heat stress. Stay hydrated, reduce activity, and stay out of the direct sun. Do you:

**Have central air conditioning?** Try using your air handler to keep cool and, by installing a better filter, clean the air at the same time! Check with an HVAC technician if you are unsure if your system can use a better filter.

**Have a window A/C unit?** Place a HEPA PAC or a DIY box fan/filter in the same room with the A/C unit to remove pollutants that may leak in and turn off the outdoor air intake.

**Have no air conditioning?** Open your windows at night for cooling. After you close the windows, use PACs or DIY box fan/filter to remove smoke that enters with cool air. If it's simply too hot or you cannot tolerate any smoke, consider staying somewhere with clean, cool air or leaving the area until the smoke clears.



Quick link  
to our  
website

Be careful, breathe  
easy, keep cool