



# Yakima Health District

## Media Release

---

**For immediate release:** July 26, 2019

**Contact:** Nathan Johnson, Public Information Officer

**Phone Number:** (509)249-6553

### **Wildfire smoke may impact air quality; take steps to protect health**

Wildfires burning across the state may create unhealthy air quality in our area. Yakima Health District health officials are urging residents to regularly monitor local air quality and limit their time outdoors when the air becomes unhealthy.

Washington State Department of Ecology's [Air Quality Monitoring website](#) has a map of air quality statewide. The map uses [color-coded categories](#) to report when air quality is good, moderate or unhealthy.

Breathing smoke from wildfires isn't healthy for anyone, but some people are more likely to have health problems when the air quality isn't good. People at risk for problems include children younger than 18 and adults older than 65, people with heart and lung diseases, people with respiratory illnesses and colds, people who have had a stroke, pregnant women and people who smoke.

When air is smoky, even healthy people can have [symptoms or health problems](#). Symptoms can range from minor irritation to life-threatening complications, including:

- Sore throat
- Headaches
- Burning eyes
- Coughing
- Wheezing
- Shortness of breath
- Chest pain

The best way to protect your health when the air is smoky is to limit time outdoors and reduce physical activity. This is especially important for people at risk for health problems when air quality isn't good.

People with heart or lung disease, including asthma, should follow their medical management plans and contact their health care provider when necessary. Those experiencing serious symptoms, such as shortness of breath or chest pain, should seek immediate medical care.

Here are some additional steps to take to protect yourself and your family from wildfire smoke:

- [Improve indoor air](#) in your home using a high-efficiency HEPA filter. Choose a room with no fireplace and few windows and doors. Make sure your vehicle has a HEPA-equivalent air filter.



# Yakima Health District

- Turn the air conditioner in your home and vehicle to recirculate to avoid bringing smoky outdoor air inside.
- Seek indoor shelter or public places with monitored air quality if you cannot improve the quality of air in your home.
- If you cannot keep your home cool on hot, smoky days, utilize public places with air conditioning.
- Choose alternatives to outdoor family activities. If the air quality is unhealthy, choose indoor exercise activities to limit time outdoors. Check air quality conditions before you travel or attend outdoor events.
- [Use and properly wear a respiratory mask](#) labeled N95 or N100, if appropriate. People who must be outside for extended periods of time in smoky air may benefit from wearing one of these masks, if worn correctly. These masks are not recommended for children or people with beards.
- Relocate if the air quality is hazardous.

## **Additional resources:**

- Washington State Department of Health [Smoke From Fires webpage](#)
- Washington State Department of Health [Wildfires webpage](#)
- [Yakima Health District](#)
- [Yakima Regional Clean Air Agency](#)