



Coronavirus COVID-19

BC Centre for Disease Control | BC Ministry of Health



HOW YOU CAN SLOW THE SPREAD OF COVID-19

Take care of others by taking care of yourself.

Wash your hands, don't touch your face, and stay home if you are sick.

Stay at Home and Physically Distance

Stay at home whenever you can. Maintain 2 meters distance from those outside of your household.

Wildfire Smoke and COVID-19

April 17, 2020

What is the concern?

- There is an ongoing COVID-19 pandemic in British Columbia, and the wildfire season is now underway.
- Wildfire smoke is a complex mixture of different air pollutants that can affect your health ([link](#)).
- Exposure to air pollution can irritate the lungs, cause inflammation, and alter immune function, making it more difficult to fight respiratory infections such as COVID-19.
- When conditions are smoky, more people who are exposed to the novel coronavirus may develop COVID-19 and some cases of COVID-19 may become more severe.

Who is at most risk?

- Those who have been diagnosed with COVID-19 or another respiratory infection.
- Those who have pre-existing respiratory conditions such as asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), interstitial lung disease (ILD), or lung cancer.
- Those who are taking chemotherapy or drugs that suppress the immune system.
- Those who have other risk factors that make them more susceptible to both wildfire smoke and COVID-19, such as older age, diabetes, heart disease, and insecure housing.
- Wildfire smoke exposure is also a concern for pregnant women, infants, children, and socially marginalized people ([link](#)).

What should you do if you have symptoms?

- Exposure to wildfire smoke and COVID-19 can both cause respiratory symptoms such as a dry cough, sore throat, or difficulty breathing.
- Anyone experiencing severe symptoms such as difficulty breathing, or chest pain should seek prompt medical attention by calling 9-1-1 or going to the nearest Emergency Department. It is safe to do so.
- If you are experiencing mild symptoms, use the [BC COVID-19 Self-Assessment Tool](#) to help determine whether you need further assessment or testing for COVID-19.
- If you still have questions after using the self-assessment tool, contact your healthcare provider or call 8-1-1 for further guidance.



Ministry of Health



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If you have fever, a new cough, or are having difficulty breathing, call 8-1-1.

Non-medical inquiries (ex. travel, physical distancing): 1-888-COVID19 (1888-268-4319) or text 604-630-0300



How can you find cleaner air during the COVID-19 pandemic?

- The best way to protect against the potentially harmful effects of wildfire smoke is to reduce exposure and seek cleaner air spaces.
- Finding cleaner air can be more challenging under strict physical distancing guidelines, because public facilities such as libraries, community centres, and shopping malls are closed.
- Consider creating a cleaner air space at home to protect yourself from wildfire smoke during the COVID-19 pandemic.
 - Use a portable air cleaner in one or more rooms ([link](#)). Portable air cleaners work best when run continuously with doors and windows closed.
 - Whenever possible, use air conditioners, heat pumps, evaporative coolers, fans, and window shades to keep your cleaner air space comfortably cool on hot days. Overheating can cause serious health problems ([link](#)).
 - If you have a forced air system in your home, talk to your service provider about different filters and settings that can be used to reduce indoor smoke.
- Avoid activities that create more indoor and outdoor air pollution, such as frying foods, sweeping and vacuuming, and using gas-powered appliances.
- Although some face masks can provide protection from wildfire smoke, medical masks and N95 respirators MUST be reserved for frontline healthcare workers during the pandemic.

What else can you do to stay healthy if it gets smoky this summer?

- Get prepared for the wildfire smoke season as you would do in any other summer ([link](#)).
- If you have a chronic health condition, work with your healthcare providers to create a management plan for smoky conditions.
- If you use rescue medications, make sure that you have an ample supply at home and carry them with you at all times during the wildfire season.
- Limit outdoor exercise when it is smoky outside, or choose lower-intensity activities to reduce smoke exposure ([link](#)).
- Use the Air Quality Health Index (AQHI) to evaluate local and regional air quality conditions ([link](#)).
- Know where to find other reliable information on wildfire smoke and air quality ([link](#)).

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