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(509) 392-7047

### July 2022 Health Coaching Hint “HOW TO PREPARE FOR WILDFIRE SEASON”

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Summer’s here and that means it is time to prepare for wildfire season. In Washington state, fire season is typically from mid-July to mid-September with approximately 900 fires fought throughout the state. A majority of those (about 70%) occur here in Eastern Washington.

Taking the time to make sure you are ready for this time of year can be a great way to minimize the risk to your health and reduce potential disruptions to your daily life.

#### WHO IS THE MOST AT RISK?

While anybody may have a negative response to exposure from the smoke caused by wildfires, these are the people who are more at risk:

- > Anybody with a lung diseases like COPD or asthma, especially the elderly
- > Anybody with heart disease, especially the elderly
- > Children: Their airways are still developing and they breathe more air per pound of body weight
- > Expectant mothers due to physical changes from the pregnancy such as increased breathing rates

#### HOW CAN YOU REDUCE THE RISK FROM WILDFIRE SMOKE?

Follow these tips for minimizing the effects from wildfire season to you and those you love:

**1. Know where to find air quality alerts.** Websites like AirNow or local, state, or federal government agencies are great resources for updates about smoke and fire risk in your area.

**2. Create a disease management plan.** Talk to your medical practitioner to see if you are at risk of exacerbated symptoms, to know when to call for medical attention, and which medications can help you reduce your risk.

**3. Stock up on supplies.** Minimize the need to go outside during a smoke event by ensuring you have several days of medications and food on hand.

**4. Check your HVAC system.** Talk to a heating and air conditioning specialist to make sure your system has filters that will ensure the air quality inside your home stays healthy. If you don't have an HVAC, consider purchasing fans or an air conditioner so you can cool your home without opening the doors or windows.

**5. Consider buying a portable air cleaner.** Adding a portable air cleaner with a HEPA filter to your home is a great way to ensure you have a safe space during smoky days.

**6. Wear a mask.** If you do have to go outside during a smoke event, use an N95 respirator or mask to reduce the quantity of particulates you inhale.

**7. Have an evacuation/relocation plan.** If smoke levels get too high it may be unsafe to remain in the area. Have a plan for where you can stay until the air quality improves. Save time by organizing the important items ahead of time, including financial and personal documents.

**8. Protect pets.** Include your pets in your plan. To learn more about how to look for signs of smoke inhalation and how to prepare or respond appropriately, check out the [Protect Your Pets from Wildfire Smoke](#) resource.

**9. Avoid activities that increase indoor pollution.** These activities can increase particles in your home and should be minimized during a smoke event: burning candles, using fireplaces, using gas stoves, vacuuming, and smoking.