

## **Keeping Healthy During Wildfires**

With the fires like the ones we had in the rolling hills of Riverside and San Diego counties in early May and in Los Angeles County this past summer, it is important for people who are in close proximity to the affected areas to limit their exposure to smoke. Children and adults with heart or respiratory diseases, like asthma, might consider staying with relatives or friends whose air quality is not affected by the fires.

However, if there is already a lot of smoke in the area, leaving home might sometimes be worse than staying inside. If this is the case, then in addition to staying indoors, there are several other ways to minimize your risk.

1. Continue to limit outdoor activity—particularly aerobic sports--in smoky areas.
2. Keep windows closed as much as possible and if you have an air conditioner, use it to help filter the air. Change the filter after smoke has subsided.
3. Monitor your child’s breathing – watch for respiratory symptoms, such as coughing and wheezing. If respiratory symptoms appear, bring your child indoors and consult with a healthcare provider.
4. Warn children not to play in soot or ash gathered outside. These materials can be harmful to a child’s respiratory system, especially if he or she has asthma.
5. Keep pets indoors as much as possible. If the pet has been outside, bathe it before allowing it back into the home.
6. All family members should leave shoes outside the home to avoid tracking in any ash or particulate matter.
7. Have your children shower before bed – particularly if they spent time outdoors that day.
8. Thoroughly wash any fruits or vegetables from the garden to clean off any residue.
9. If damage to your home or property requires the clean-up of soot and ash, wear a protective mask to avoid inhaling the debris.

If anyone in your family develops health problems from breathing smoky air or from other aspects of the wildfires, contact a healthcare provider. To find the name and contact information for your County Health Officer, go to: