



Media Advisory
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HEALTH ADVISORY

Be Aware of Smoke in the Air During the Holiday Weekend

SAN JOSE, CA – The Santa Clara County Public Health Department is advising residents to take precautions this weekend due to the visible smoke and higher pollutants in the air. The current situation is a result of the Summit fire in the Santa Cruz Mountains. Individuals with respiratory problems, young children and older adults should limit their exposure to smoky air by staying indoors as much as possible. Windows and doors should be kept closed to prevent indoor air from becoming dirty.

“People really need to pay attention to the air quality as they consider spending time outdoors this weekend, especially when it come to doing any physical activity,” said Dr. Marty Fenstersheib, Health Officer of Santa Clara County. “If you can see or smell smoke in the air, you may want to hold off on biking, running or other strenuous physical activities until the air clears.”

Individuals most at risk for illness due to smoke in the air include children, seniors and those with respiratory problems. These individuals are advised to stay inside and not go outdoors and/or exercise outside. People at risk should also avoid excess exertion and exposure to cigarette smoke and other respiratory irritants. If you develop repeated coughing, chest tightness or pain, wheezing, difficulty breathing or nausea, call your medical provider immediately.



Symptoms that may develop due to the amount of smoke in the air include irritation of the lungs and eyes, coughing, scratchy throat and irritated sinuses. Persons in good health should use common sense and limit outdoor activities when smoke is visible. For more information, please see the Question & Answer below, or you can call 211 for basic health information.

Questions & Answers

Is smoke bad for me?

If you are healthy, usually you are not at a major risk of illness from smoke. But even healthy children and adults can be affected by the smoke and should take precautions.

What should I do to protect myself?

Use common sense. If it smells or looks smoky, stay indoors as much as possible. Do not exercise or do any strenuous physical activity outdoors.

How will I know if the smoke is affecting me?

You may have a scratchy throat, cough, irritated sinuses, headaches, runny nose, upset stomach or stinging eyes. Children and people with lung disease may find it difficult to breathe as deeply or vigorously as usual, and they may cough or feel short of breath. People with diseases such as asthma or chronic bronchitis may find their symptoms worsening.

If you have repeated coughing, wheezing, chest tightness, trouble breathing, or nausea, call your doctor or medical provider and seek medical care immediately.

Who is most at risk?

People at greater risk of illness from smoke include people with heart or lung disease, such as congestive heart failure, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, emphysema, or asthma. Children and the elderly are also more vulnerable.

If my kids are healthy, can I let them go out and play?

No. It is not advisable for children to be outside while there is smoke in the air. If you can see or smell smoke, it is best to keep them indoors.

My eyes are itchy and stinging from the smoke, what should I do?

First, try rinsing your eyes with clear, cool water. You can also try using eye drops. If you continue to have a problem, call your medical provider.



I have outdoor events planned this Memorial Day weekend, what should I do?

Use caution – if you can see or smell smoke it means it’s still in the air. If the air stays this way over the weekend, it is best to limit your time outdoors. Most people who are healthy are not at a major risk of illness from smoke. People at greater risk because of heart or lung disease, as well as children and the elderly, should stay inside. Also, listen to the local news. If the air situation worsens, it will be best to stay inside and avoid outside activities.

Should I still have a barbeque this weekend?

If there’s still heavy smoke in the air over the weekend, having a barbeque will make the air worse in your area. Please take this into consideration in making your plans for the weekend.

Once inside, should I run my air conditioner?

Once indoors, keep your windows, doors and vents closed. If you have one, run your air conditioner. Close the outside air intake, or decrease the outside air exchange to a minimum of 20%. Since smoke may cause your filters to get dirty faster, check them regularly and keep them clean.

What if I don’t have an air conditioner?

If you don’t have an air conditioner, close the windows and turn on a fan that is part of your heating system. Don’t turn on the heat – just the fan. In most cases, these fans filter our larger air particles. If the outside temperature gets hot, you should think about getting inside a building with air conditioning.

I have asthma, what should I do?

If you have asthma, take your medicines as prescribed by your doctor. If you are supposed to measure you peak flows, make sure you do so. Call your doctor if your symptoms get worse. You can also check with your doctor about using nasal sprays and inhalers regularly.

How can I tell when smoke levels are dangerous?

Generally, the more you can see or smell the smoke is in the air – the worse it is. So the more you can notice the smoke probably means smoke levels are higher and the air quality is worse.