

## Protect yourself from the health effects of wildfire smoke

The Sarasota County Health Department urges residents and visitors to take precautions to limit exposure to outdoor smoke arising from wildfires around Florida.

Smoke is a respiratory irritant, and can affect people with a variety of symptoms including coughing, a scratchy throat, irritated sinuses, shortness of breath, chest pain, headaches, stinging eyes and a runny nose. Smoke may also worsen conditions such as asthma and other chronic respiratory or lung conditions.

When smoke levels are high enough, even healthy people may experience some of these symptoms.

There are many steps you can take to protect yourself and your family from the health effects of smoke:

- Be your own health judge. If you can see smoke outside, or you feel the effects of the smoke, avoid prolonged outdoor activities. It is especially important to limit time spent outdoors for children and persons with existing medical conditions.
- Stay indoors whenever possible. Run your air conditioner with a clean filter and the fresh air intake closed, to prevent additional smoke from entering your home. If you don't have an air conditioner, and are a comfortable temperature inside with the windows closed, stay inside. If your home is too warm, seek alternative shelter.
- Keep particle levels inside and around your home lower by not burning outdoor yard waste, smoking tobacco, or using anything that burns, such as wood fireplaces, gas logs, gas stoves and candles.
- Delay vacuuming when possible, as vacuuming stirs up particles already inside your home.
- Follow your doctor's advice about taking your medications and adhere to your asthma management plan if you have asthma or other lung disease. Call your doctor if your symptoms worsen.
- Stay alert to any news coverage or health warnings related to smoke. Pay attention to local air quality reports.

For more local information, contact the Sarasota County Call Center at 941-861-5000 or visit [www.scgov.net](http://www.scgov.net) or [http://www.cdc.gov/nceh/airpollution/airquality/debris\\_smoke.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/nceh/airpollution/airquality/debris_smoke.htm).