

## Health Impact of Wildfires

The impact of wildfires in Austin, Travis County, and surrounding areas is visible with smoke and haze covering much of the central Texas area. People are concerned about potential health effects from breathing smoke from the fires and how they can protect themselves and their families. The following information summarizes some of the health problems that may be associated with wildfires and some specific measures you can take to help protect your health and the health of your family.

### Health threats from wildfire smoke:

Smoke from wildfires is a mixture of gases and fine particles from burning trees and plants. It can hurt your eyes, irritate your respiratory system and worsen symptoms from pre-existing conditions. Common symptoms of smoke exposure include:

- Coughing
- Scratchy throat
- Irritated sinuses
- Shortness of breath
- Chest pain
- Headaches
- Stinging eyes
- Runny nose

Smoke can pose a serious health threat, especially if you have chronic heart or lung disease. Children and older adults are also at greater risk of adverse health effects. Even healthy people can be affected by smoky conditions.

Protecting yourself and your family:

- Limit your exposure to smoke
- Stay indoors with windows and doors shut
- Use air conditioning, if available, and run it with the fresh air intakes closed
- Reduce other sources of indoor air pollution
- Do not smoke
- Do not burn candles
- Do not vacuum
- Drink plenty of water
- Avoid strenuous activity
- Take all your medications as scheduled
- If you have asthma or other breathing problems, see your doctor if your symptoms become worse
- Consider leaving the area or going to a shelter until the smoke conditions improve

For more information on air quality:

[www.tceq.state.tx.us/](http://www.tceq.state.tx.us/)

For additional information on health effects of smoke from wildfires:

[http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/preparedness/nat\\_public.shtm](http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/preparedness/nat_public.shtm)

<http://www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/wildfires/pdf/wildfiresfacts.pdf>

<http://www.airquality.org/smokeimpact/>