

# WILDFIRES AND HEALTH

## *commonly asked questions*

### ARE THERE ANY APPS I SHOULD DOWNLOAD TO KEEP ME INFORMED?

- Yes! We recommend you download these apps onto your phone:
  - AirNow app (National)
  - California SmokeSpotter app (California only)
  - WatchDuty app

### HOW DO I AVOID BRINGING MORE CONTAMINANTS INTO MY HOME?

- Take off shoes at the door to avoid tracking contaminants into your home.
- If you have been working in a contaminated area and have ash or toxic material on your clothes, remove the contaminated clothing at the door and launder it separately from other clothing.
- Regularly use a vacuum cleaner with a HEPA filter to clean carpets and upholstery, and use a wet mop or wet rag to clean hard surfaces.
- If you have dogs, it's a good idea to wipe their paws when they come into the house, especially if you are in the burn zone.



### I'M CONCERNED ABOUT DRINKING WATER QUALITY AFTER THE FIRES. WHAT SHOULD I DO?

- If you are in an area where there is no drinking water advisory, you can drink and use the water as you do normally - water in those areas was not affected by the fire.
- If there is a drinking water advisory in your area, it means they need to test the water to be sure it is safe; in that case, don't drink the water or use it for cooking until your area has been cleared; Avoid taking baths, and take short showers (or shower elsewhere such as at a gym outside the affected area). While we cannot say for certain, it is unlikely that washing your hands with water where there is an advisory will be a problem.
- Refer to our [factsheet about water for more helpful information](#) !

### HOW DO I MANAGE THE AIR QUALITY IN MY HOME?

- Avoid activities that worsen indoor air quality, such as smoking, burning candles or incense, searing, grilling, or deep-frying food, or cooking without using your stove's range hood.
- Check and change your furnace/HVAC filter at least annually to be sure it's clean. Use a MERV-13 filter for your furnace or HVAC.
- Use an air cleaner (also known as an "air purifier"), especially in bedrooms. Choose one that uses HEPA technology, and preferably one without an ion generator, UV technology, or 'plasma', since these have the potential to create other contaminants. Select one that is large enough to work for the size of the room you will be using it in.
- If obtaining an air filter is not possible, consider [building a DIY air cleaner](#)
- Check out our [factsheet on Indoor Air quality](#) !

### THERE'S A LOT OF ASH SURROUNDING MY HOME AFTER THE FIRES, HOW CAN I CLEAN IT?

- Be careful cleaning ash left after fires, as it contains toxic chemicals left behind by materials burned in the fires. Breathing ash can cause asthmatic symptoms and irritation of the eyes, nose, and throat. Getting ash on your skin can cause a rash.
- Avoid contact with your skin by wearing long sleeves, pants, coveralls, closed-toe shoes, and shoe covers. Wear gloves, eye protection, and an N-95 mask when possible.
- To clean up ash outdoors, wet the ash first, so it doesn't blow around, then gently sweep it into a plastic trash bag and dispose of it in the trash. Do not use a leaf blower or any other method which can blow the ash around.



### MY CHILD'S SCHOOL IS NEAR THE BURN ZONE. WHAT CAN THE SCHOOL DO TO BE SURE IT'S SAFE?

- The school should be cleaned up indoors by wet-mopping all the floors and wiping down other surfaces, such as desks, tables, and chairs with microfiber towels.
- Outdoors, all play structures, and play areas should be wiped down and wet-swept to remove ash.
- Classrooms should have HEPA air cleaners which can be used if the air quality is bad.
- If the school is in an area with a drinking water advisory, an alternate source of water should be provided.

