

SMOKE ALARM: THE ADVERSE EFFECTS OF LOW AIR QUALITY CAUSED BY WILDFIRES



According to the National Interagency Fire Center (NIFC), the US fire season is almost 80 days longer than in the 1970s. In some regions, particularly the western states, the fire season has expanded by as much as 105 days.

Beyond the immediate danger of the flames, the smoke and pollutants released during wildfires create low air quality that can have far-reaching health consequences.

Smoke generated by fires contains toxic substances, including particulate matter, carbon monoxide, nitrogen oxides, volatile organic compounds, and hazardous air pollutants. When inhaled, these pollutants can penetrate deep into the lungs and enter the bloodstream, leading to a range of health issues:

Respiratory System Effects

The fine particles in wildfire smoke, known as PM2.5, can irritate the lungs, trigger inflammation, and impair lung function. Prolonged exposure to PM2.5 can increase the risk of respiratory conditions such as bronchitis, asthma exacerbation, and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD).

Cardiovascular Complications

Chemical components in smoke can enter the bloodstream and cause inflammation, oxidative stress, and blood clotting – leading to serious cardiovascular health issues, particularly in individuals with pre-existing heart conditions.

Mental and emotional effects

The impact of poor air quality and the heightened risk of wildfires can lead to increased stress, anxiousness, and poor sleep.

Other Health Effects

In addition to respiratory and cardiovascular complications, low air quality caused by wildfires can contribute to eye and throat irritation, headaches, fatigue, and worsened allergies. It can also increase the susceptibility to respiratory infections and worsen the symptoms of existing health conditions.

Your holistic healthcare professional can play a crucial role in helping you navigate low air quality.

Specifically, your practitioner is a great resource for recommending foods, nutrients, herbal products, and supplements that support respiratory and cardiovascular health during periods of poor air quality. They can also help you manage stress, promote healthy relaxation, and support the body's systems for the healthy elimination of toxins.

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