

MEDIA RELEASE

For immediate release

June 23, 2023

Smoke in the Air

Due to forest fires in the region, some communities in northwestern Ontario may experience smoke in the air over the weekend. Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECC) is forecasting moderate-high risk Air Quality Health Advisories.

Breathing in smoky air can be harmful to health and may cause coughing, throat irritation, headaches, and difficulty breathing. People with lung or heart disease, seniors, children and pregnant women are at increased risk of the health effects of smoke. Northwestern Health Unit (NWHU) recommends that individuals consider reducing or rescheduling strenuous activities, especially if experiencing symptoms.

Follow these tips to protect you and your family:

- If it looks smoky outside, keep the air inside your house as clean as possible by closing your windows and doors. If you have air cleaners with high-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filters, turn them on.
- If you have an HVAC system in your home, use the highest rated MERV filter rated for your system and set your fan to recirculate.
- If you have symptoms seek clean air by staying inside but keep cool – being too hot is more risky than breathing smoke for most people.
- Avoid smoking or vaping to limit the number of harmful particles in your lungs and in the air around you.
- If you are in your car or truck, keep the windows closed and put the air system on 'recirculate'.
- If you have an air conditioner, set it to 'recirculate' and keep it running to help filter and cool the air.
- Anyone with asthma should use their medication as prescribed. Call a health care provider if your symptoms worsen.

For more information, contact your local health unit office.

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