



Charlie Crist
Governor

Ana M. Viamonte Ros, M.D., M.P.H.
State Surgeon General

PINELLAS COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Jeannine Mallory,
Public Information Officer
Pinellas County Health Department
727-824-6908 (media only)

Pinellas County Health Department Offers Information Regarding Health Effects of Wildfire Smoke

The Pinellas County Health Department is offering health information to those impacted by the smoke. When smoke levels are high, even healthy people may experience symptoms.

Smoke can cause:

- coughing
- scratchy throat
- irritated sinuses
- shortness of breath
- chest pain or tightness
- headache
- stinging or burning eyes
- runny nose
- worsening of asthma

If you have pre-existing conditions such as respiratory allergies, asthma and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), the smoke may make your condition or symptoms worse.

To protect yourself and your family from the harmful effects of smoke:

- **Avoid prolonged outdoor activities**, especially if you can see smoke outside or you feel the effects of the smoke. It is important to limit the time children and people with pre-existing conditions spend outdoors.
- **Stay indoors whenever possible**. If possible, keep windows and doors closed. Use 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 it is too warm to stay inside with the windows closed, seek shelter elsewhere – i.e., friend/family member's home, public library, shopping centers.
- **Do not add to indoor pollution**. When smoke levels are high do not use anything that burns, such as candles, fireplaces or gas stoves. Do not vacuum, because vacuuming stirs up particles already inside your home. Do not smoke, because smoking puts even more pollution into your indoor air.
- **Follow your doctor's advice** about taking your medicines and stick 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 close attention to local air quality reports. For more information on the air quality index and recommendations visit: www.dep.state.fl.us/air/airquality.htm.

For more information, please contact your local county health department or visit www.doh.state.fl.us or www.FloridaDisaster.org.

The Florida Emergency Information Line is 1-800-342-3557. ESF 14 Public Information Emergency Support Function is 850-921-0384.

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