

Bushfires and asthma

Asthma management during bushfire season

For people with asthma living in high risk bushfire zones, the bushfire season is time to be on high alert for asthma symptoms. Smoke and increased air pollution from fires can trigger asthma symptoms, as can high emotions such as stress and anxiety.



Know the symptoms

Bushfire smoke and debris can trigger asthma symptoms, such as:

- coughing
- wheezing
- chest tightness
- shortness of breath.

Have an asthma bushfire plan

Anyone with asthma living in a high-risk bushfire zone should include asthma management in their fire safety survival plan:

- Keep your reliever handy at all times.
- Make sure you have plenty of asthma medication available to you.
- If you decide to evacuate make sure your reliever and other medications go with you.
- Communicate your medication requirements to evacuation personnel and volunteers.
- Continue to use your asthma medications as prescribed by your doctor.

First aid for asthma

Swift action can prevent an asthma attack from becoming an asthma emergency. If asthma symptoms occur:

- Follow your personal asthma action plan.
- If you don't have an asthma action plan, take 4 separate puffs of a blue/grey reliever via a spacer.
- If the symptoms aren't going away or are getting worse, then follow the steps in First Aid for Asthma.

First Aid for Asthma charts:

- [First Aid for Asthma 12+](#)
- [First Aid for Asthma Children Under 12](#)
- [First Aid for Asthma Combination Inhalers](#)





Be aware of the risk

If you have asthma or other chronic respiratory conditions, or if you are responsible for a child or older person with asthma, be aware of the risk and the fact that these triggers can linger long after the actual bushfire threat has subsided.

This is also critically important for the many hundreds of volunteers, emergency personnel and media representatives working within the fire zones.

People in areas not directly impacted by the bushfires, including built-up areas, are also at risk as winds can carry smoke and ash particles long distances.

Try to reduce exposure to smoke by staying indoors with the doors and windows closed, doing as little outdoor activity as possible and using recirculated air in the car.

Subscribe to state emergency websites or apps that provide smoke warnings.

Information for health professionals

Increased presentations for asthma should be expected around fire zones and in other areas affected by smoke haze. General practices and pharmacies around these areas should ensure they have good supplies of reliever medications and spacers, particularly for emergency use.

Disclaimer: It is important to note that information contained in this fact sheet is not intended to replace professional medical advice. Any questions regarding a medical diagnosis or treatment should be directed to a medical practitioner.

Smoke and air quality

People in areas not directly impacted by bushfires are also at risk as winds can carry smoke and ash long distances.

When smoke affects air quality over a longer period, consider visiting your doctor for an asthma check-up, especially if your symptoms are happening more often or getting worse.

Your doctor can review your asthma management, update your asthma action plan so you know what to do if your asthma flares up, and check you are using your devices correctly to make sure your medication is getting where it is needed.

The National Asthma Council Australia's how-to video library has technique tips to help you use common inhalers and nasal sprays.

Avoiding the smoke might mean spending more time than usual indoors. Over longer periods, consider your indoor environment and steps you can take to minimise potential triggers.

Access first aid for asthma charts



Download asthma action plans



How-to video library

