



# News Release

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## Warm sunny weather, wildfires mean air pollution worsens, health risks increase

**OLYMPIA** — The warm summer weather calls Washingtonians outdoors for hiking, biking, or simply relaxing. It's also the time when smoke from wildfires or worsening [ground-level ozone](#) known as "smog" can make outdoor air a health risk to some people.

Several large fires in Eastern Washington may cause poor air quality in surrounding areas. When the air we breathe contains fine ash, soot, gases, and other irritants, it gets into the lungs and can cause problems, especially for people with breathing or heart conditions.

"People who have conditions like asthma, bronchitis, and heart disease can develop serious health problems when they breathe polluted air," explains State Health Officer Dr. Kathy Lofy. "It's important that they pay attention to air quality reports and protect themselves from smoky or smoggy air."

Older adults are at risk and are often unaware they have underlying health conditions that can be aggravated by poor air quality. Kids are also at risk because their lungs and airways are still developing and they breathe more air per pound of body weight than adults — putting them at higher risk. And kids often spend more time outside.

Air pollution in the summer time comes from several sources. Wildfires produce [smoky air](#) containing fine particles and toxic chemicals. Exhaust from cars and trucks combines with sunny, hot weather to cause ozone build-up. When pollution is high, outdoor activity should be limited to less strenuous exercise — going for a walk instead of a run may be a good idea.

Everyone can lower their exposure to air pollution by checking air quality conditions before heading outdoors. [Department of Ecology's clickable state map](#) offers current air quality

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information online. People with lung and heart disease should be especially careful to check air quality and limit outdoor activities when air pollution is increased.

More tips for reducing exposure to air pollution and health information can be found on the [Outdoor Air Quality](#), [Wildfire Smoke](#) and the [Washington Tracking Network](#) websites.

The [Department of Health website](#) ([www.doh.wa.gov](http://www.doh.wa.gov)) is your source for *a healthy dose of information*. Also, [find us on Facebook](#) and [follow us on Twitter](#).

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