









# Air Quality Guide

Check current air quality at [SpokaneCleanAir.org](http://SpokaneCleanAir.org)

## Air Quality Index (AQI)

The AQI is a tool for reporting how clean or polluted the air is and how it may affect people's health. Agencies monitor air quality with sensors placed at multiple locations in Spokane County and Washington state.

| AIR QUALITY INDEX                                |   | WHAT SHOULD I DO?   |
|--|---|---|
| <b>Good</b><br>0-50                              |    | It's a great day to be outdoors and a good time to make a plan if unhealthy air quality is forecast.  |
| <b>Moderate</b><br>51-100                        |    | Some people are more sensitive to lower levels of particle pollution and should limit outdoor activity. Sensitive groups should watch for symptoms.                               |
| <b>Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups</b><br>101-150 |  | Sensitive groups should take steps to reduce exposure like limiting time outside and strenuous outdoor activity. Everyone should watch for symptoms as a sign to reduce exposure. |
| <b>Unhealthy</b><br>151-200                      |  | Everyone should reduce exposure. Limit time outside, avoid strenuous outdoor activity, and follow tips for cleaner indoor air.  |
| <b>Very Unhealthy</b><br>201-300                 |  | Everyone should reduce exposure. Stay inside and filter indoor air to keep it cleaner. Go elsewhere for cleaner air, if needed.   |
| <b>Hazardous</b><br>> 300                        |  | Everyone should reduce exposure, stay inside and filter indoor air. Go elsewhere for cleaner air, if needed.  |

### Know the symptoms of breathing smoke:

burning eyes, coughing, throat and nose irritation, headaches, fatigue, wheezing, shortness of breath, irregular heartbeat, chest pain. Seek medical attention for serious symptoms.

## How to Protect Yourself

1. Reduce the intensity and time spent engaged in outdoor physical activity.
2. Stay inside and keep doors and windows closed unless it is too hot.
3. Don't add indoor pollution—don't smoke, burn candles or vacuum.
4. Filter indoor air with HVAC system, HEPA portable air cleaner, or DIY box fan filter.
5. Set your air conditioner to recirculate.
6. If you cannot keep air at home clean, go somewhere that isn't smoky such as a public space or friend's house.
7. Wear a NIOSH-approved respirator, such as an N95 mask, if you have to be outside.

## Who is at Risk?

If there is enough smoke in the air, wildfire smoke can make anyone sick. People are at greater risk if they:

- Have certain health conditions such as heart disease, lung diseases like asthma or COPD, respiratory illnesses, or diabetes
- Are younger than 18 or older than 65
- Are pregnant
- Work outdoors
- Earn a low income
- Are Black, Indigenous or people of color



## Frequently Asked Questions

### What is a wildfire?

A wildfire is an uncontrolled fire burning in natural spaces like forests and grasslands. About 85% of wildfires are human caused.<sup>1</sup>



### If the air is smoky, is my home in danger?

The air may be smoky due to nearby fires, or it can become smoky because of fires many miles away. The best way to check the location of fires and find out where smoke is coming from is to visit [fire.airnow.gov](https://fire.airnow.gov).

### If a wildfire is far away, can the smoke still affect us?

Yes. Wildfire smoke can affect the air quality—how polluted the air is. Wildfire smoke is a mix of gases and fine particles called PM2.5. It can irritate your airways, cause lung inflammation, and make other lung illnesses worse.<sup>2</sup> Smoke exposure symptoms include burning eyes, coughing, throat and nose irritation, headaches, fatigue, wheezing, shortness of breath, irregular heartbeat, chest pain.

### How do I check the air quality?

Check local air quality at [spokaneCleanAir.org](https://spokaneCleanAir.org).

### What time of year is our region affected by wildfire smoke?

Wildfires typically occur in the summer in the western United States. Wildfire season peaks between early June and late September. However, wildfires can occur anywhere that conditions are right.

Learn more at [srhd.org/wildfiresmoke](https://srhd.org/wildfiresmoke).

<sup>1</sup> "Wildfire Causes and Evaluations," National Park Service, updated March 8, 2022, <https://www.nps.gov/articles/wildfire-causes-and-evaluation.htm>.

<sup>2</sup> "Health Effects Attributed to Wildfire Smoke," United States Environmental Protection Agency, updated on November 7, 2022, <https://www.epa.gov/wildfire-smoke-course/health-effects-attributed-wildfire-smoke>.