

Montana Healthcare Programs MESSENGER

Wildfires and Health Impacts

Wildfires are something in Montana that can be bad for your health. This can be from the harmful stuff in wildfire smoke. With changes in weather and the way wildfires are taken care of, wildfires and wildfire smoke are now common things across the West. Wildfire smoke has a lot of harmful particulate matter (PM), gases, and chemicals. The smallest parts, those less than 2.5 microns in size (PM2.5), can hurt one's health as these are so tiny they can travel into the bloodstream when inhaled. This can impact other parts of the body than just the lungs. Everyone is affected when exposed to wildfire smoke, but children may have health impacts sooner when exposed to lower amounts of wildfire smoke.

"Any kind of air pollution can be dangerous to young children, but wildfire smoke is about 10 times as toxic for children compared to burning fossil fuels." Lisa Patel, Stanford Children's Health

Children are at higher risk of being around wildfire smoke for a few reasons. First, they take more breaths per minute than adults. With respect to their size, they breathe more air. If the air is smoky, children breathe in more PM per minute than adults do. Children are often more active than adults, especially outside, so they get more PM during a smoke event. Children between the ages of 0-5 years are most at risk when being around wildfire smoke. Children ages 0-17 are also a group at higher risk than adults. Lungs continue to grow into adulthood and being around smoke at a young age may cause long-term harm. Children may have undiagnosed respiratory diseases, such as asthma, that can be made worse by being around wildfire smoke.

"Generally, cells in the lungs called alveolar macrophages will pick up the (PM2.5) and clear them out-at reasonable doses. It's when the system gets overwhelmed that you can have a problem." Chris Migliaccio, University of Montana



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Back to School Essentials List for Parents and Healthy Children

- Well-child checks
- Vaccines
- Nutrition
- Sleep
- Positivity

For more information on these tips, please visit the full article at [Back-to-school essentials for parents - Mayo Clinic Health System](#).

Wildfires and Health Impacts Continued

Thankfully, there are some steps we can take during a wildfire smoke event to keep our families safe:

Keep track of air quality. Check <https://fire.airnow.gov/ap> to know the current local air quality.

If the air is not healthy for Sensitive Groups, do less outdoor activities, spend less time outside, and find a clean indoor air space.

When driving, keep windows closed. Set air conditioning to recirculate. Replace car cabin air filters.

Keep you and your family hydrated. Drinking more water helps the body get rid of bad smoke particles that were inhaled and reduces inflammation.

Indoor air quality is also affected during a smoke event, but can be made better by:

Keeping your doors and windows closed. If you need to cool your home during a wildfire smoke event, open your windows to cool your home then close the windows and run air cleaners.

Running a HEPA air purifier or a Do-It-Yourself box fan filter in your home. Run the air cleaner in the room you spend the most time in, like the bedroom.

Avoiding other activities that can make indoor air worse, like stovetop cooking, candle burning, vacuuming and smoking indoors.

If you have central air, set it to recirculate (turn the fan on) and install the highest rated MERV filter your system can handle, like MERV 13+.

If a wildfire smoke event is during an extreme heat event, prioritize staying cool and then focus on breathing clean air; heat stress can lead to a more immediate danger than being around smoke. If your home does not have air conditioning, think about other places you may visit in the community that may have cleaner, cooler air during the hottest times of the day.

To learn more about the health impacts of wildfire smoke and ways to protect your family, visit airquality.mt.gov and montanawildfiresmoke.org

Health Effects of Wildfire Smoke

Short-Term Risks

- Chest tightness or pain
- Shortness of breath
- Coughing or wheezing
- Itchy eyes
- Scratchy throat
- Dizziness
- Decreased ability to focus
- Headache
- Change in sleep patterns
- Feelings of irritability, hopelessness, or depression

Long-term Risks

- Increased risk of heart and lung issues
- Decreased lung function and capacity
- Increased risk of respiratory disease and infection (asthma, bronchitis, COPD)
- Weakened immune response
- Increased risk of metabolic disorders



Montana Asthma Home Visiting Program (MAP)

Do you or someone you love struggle with asthma? Medicaid members with asthma may qualify for the free **Montana Asthma Home Visiting Program (MAP)**.

What is MAP?

MAP helps children and adults gain control of their asthma and decrease the impact it can have on their lives. Clients have fewer emergency visits and hospital stays, fewer missed school/workdays, and fewer symptoms.

Clients receive education from trained health care professionals, support materials, a home walk-through to find any potential asthma triggers, and help with the client's health team. Clients also receive a HEPA air cleaner, extra HEPA filters, and a spacer for use with inhaled medicines.

To enroll in the program, you must live in Montana and have an asthma diagnosis. If you have had an emergency visit, hospital stay, or urgent care visit for asthma in the last year, you are eligible. If you don't meet any of these, your healthcare professional may also refer you.

How can I participate?

You can ask your health care professional to send a referral to the program through the MAP Referral Portal at asthma.mt.gov. You can also send a self-referral to the MAP to get more information from a home visitor, by visiting asthma.mt.gov. Click on the MAP referral link on the right-side menu and get connected today. Don't miss out on this chance to get relief from your asthma!

Sign Up Today in Four Easy Steps!

1. Scan the QR Code below
2. Enter your contact information in the form.
3. Submit your form within the HIPPA compliant referral site.
Your information will not be seen by anyone but the MAP home visitor who receives it.
4. A home visitor will contact you to discuss your interest in the program.



Scan the QR code to self-refer to the Montana Asthma Control Program now!



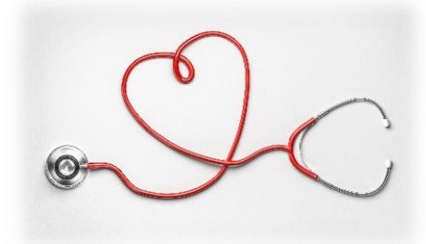
DEPARTMENT OF
PUBLIC HEALTH &
HUMAN SERVICES

Health and Economic Livelihood Partnership (HELP) 1115 Demonstration Waiver Public Notice

Following state and federal law, the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services (DPHHS) is happy to give public notice of its intent to submit an 1115 Medicaid Demonstration Waiver application. This will allow the state to start various Medicaid expansion program rules outlined in state and federal law. These include policies related to community engagement and member cost sharing.

DPHHS is giving this notice to invite comments from the public about the state's waiver application.

The HELP webpage has links for Montana Code Annotated (MCA) rules and more. This information can be found at <https://help.mt.gov>.



Key Contacts

Montana Health Care Programs/Medicaid/HMK *Plus* Member Help Line

For questions regarding benefits or Passport to Health:

1-800-362-8312

MT Health Care Programs

Montana Relay Service

For the deaf or hard of hearing:

1-800-253-4091 or 711

Montana Public Assistance Help Line

For eligibility questions:

1-888-706-1535

MT PUBLIC ASSISTANCE

Transportation Center

For questions regarding travel or approval:

1-800-292-7114.

Call before you travel, or you may not be reimbursed.