

HEALTH WATCH BULLETIN

FOREST FIRE SMOKE

The Yukon is presently experiencing a high level of wildfire activity (more than 102 fires are burning as of August 2, 2009, covering more than 116,000 hectares) which coupled with hot, dry weather, has resulted in vast areas of the Territory subjected to varying degrees of smoke.

Health Effects of Smoke Exposure due to Forest Fires

Exposure to smoke can quickly result in sore eyes, tears, cough and runny nose. Small particles trigger coughing and make it harder to breathe. Exposure to smoke can also cause worsening of heart and lung diseases like asthma, chronic bronchitis, emphysema, and congestive heart failure. Elders and young infants are also at increased risk.

- Those people with respiratory conditions, such as asthma or chronic lung disease should stay indoors and limit exertion.
- Those people with allergies or a sensitivity to smoke, should also limit exertion and consider limiting time outdoors.
- Those people that do not have asthma, lung disease or allergies, should not have adverse health effects from being outdoors; however, they may find that their eyes, nose and throat feel irritated from the smoke. Each person will have their own individual response, and should limit their time outdoors and limit strenuous activity if necessary.
- If you are concerned about your health due to forest fire smoke, call the Yukon HealthLine at 811 or speak to your health care provider (your doctor or a nurse at your community health centre).