Wildfires & Smoke: Tips for Moms & Caregivers

Wildfires can spread quickly and create dangerous smoke, even miles away. Pregnant people, infants and young children are especially vulnerable to poor air quality as their lungs are still developing. CARE, with 80 years of disaster relief expertise and a focus on women and girls, knows that moms are often their families' first responders and planning is essential to staying safe before, during, and after wildfires.

Prepare to Leave Quickly

MAKE AN EVACUATION PLAN

- ☐ Identify safe places you can go out of town and backup routes to get there.
- ☐ Prepare a go-bag with essentials for your family's needs including specific infant and child items.
- ☐ Know your child's school or daycare emergency procedures and how they will contact you.



EVACUATE SAFELY

- ☐ If an evacuation order is issued, leave immediately—Wildfires move quickly and can shift without warning due to winds.
- ☐ If traveling by car, keep windows closed and set air to recirculate.
- ☐ Search for open shelters by texting SHELTER and your ZIP CODE to 43362.
- ☐ Do not return until officials give notice.

Higher Risk Groups

Wildfire smoke can irritate the eyes, nose, throat, and lungs. Children with asthma, pregnant people, and people with chronic health conditions should avoid breathing smoke as much as possible.

Pay Attention to Risk Factors

- ☐ Monitor heat risk—Wildfires can occur during extreme heat conditions. If Heat Level is Orange or above and you don't have air conditioning, call 2-1-1 to find a local cooling center.
- ☐ Seek medical care if a child shows trouble breathing, wheezing, persistent cough, extreme sleepiness, or difficulty feeding.
- ☐ If you're pregnant, speak to your provider about tips and resources to protect you and your baby.



Wildfires & Smoke: Tips for Moms & Caregivers

Protect Against Smoke

CHECK AIR QUALITY INDEX (AQI)

- ☐ Monitor AirNow.gov or weather apps.
- ☐ AQI 100+ = unhealthy for children.
- ☐ Minimize outdoor activity when possible and wear a mask.
- ☐ Smoke can stick around days after wildfires have ended so continue to monitor.





USE MASKS AND PROTECTIVE GEAR

- ☐ If you need to be outdoors, wear a well-fitting mask. N95 masks provide the best protection from smoke, followed by KN95 masks, surgical masks, and cloth masks.
- ☐ Infants and very young children should not use masks since they do not fit properly.
- ☐ For children over 2, masks can be used if well-fitted and tolerated.

STAY INSIDE AND CREATE CLEAN INDOOR AIR

- ☐ Reduce indoor air pollution by avoiding candles, gas, propane, wood burning, stove cooking, and vacuuming.
- ☐ Run A/C on recirculation.
- ☐ Use a HEPA air purifier if available or build your own following these instructions: **https://www.epa.gov/sciencematters/do-it-yourself-air-cleaners-making-cleaner-air-more-accessible**

USE CAUTION DURING CLEAN UP

- ☐ Wear gloves, long-sleeved shirt, pants, mask, and eye protection.
- ☐ Avoid stirring up or sifting through ash as much as possible. Before sweeping surfaces, mist them with water and follow up with wet mopping.
- ☐ Children or pregnant people should not take part in cleanup work.

Wildfires & Smoke: Tips for Pregnant People

Pregnant people are a high-risk group during wildfires and smoke, even if they are miles away. Taking early precautions, such as limiting exposure, monitoring air quality, and having a plan in place, can help reduce risks and support a safer, healthier pregnancy.

Preparing for a Wildfire Event

PLAN EARLY—ESPECIALLY IF YOU'RE 36+ WEEKS

- ☐ Talk with your provider ahead of time about:
  - Evacuation options
  - Transportation
  - Sheltering needs
  - Continuity of care
  - Heat Action Plan
- ☐ Have a physical copy of your birth plan, key details about your medical history and contact information for your care provider.
- ☐ Pack a hospital bag that can double as your emergency preparedness kit—ensure it includes all the items you would need for you and your baby post-birth.
  - Include these essentials: water, non-perishable food, flashlight, radio, masks, eye protection, first aid kit, cash, nursing supplies, long sleeved shirts, pants, and gloves.
- ☐ Buy groceries you won't need to cook. Frying or grilling especially can make indoor air pollution worse.





During a Wildfire

BE AWARE OF AIR QUALITY REPORTS

- ☐ Follow instructions for "sensitive individuals" and limit outdoor time.
- ☐ If you must go outside, wear a well-fitting N95 mask.

MONITOR SYMPTOMS OF OVERHEATING

- ☐ Review medications that may increase heat sensitivity with your health provider.
- ☐ Have a cooling plan, safe indoor locations mapped, and emergency contacts ready.
- ☐ If you enter a shelter or cooling center, let registration or nurse know you are pregnant.

Wildfires & Smoke: Tips for Pregnant People

Returning Home Safely

RESUME PRENATAL CARE WHEN POSSIBLE

- ☐ Contact your provider if there is any interruption to your care.

CLEANUP

- ☐ Wildfires create ash and tiny particles that can be harmful to breathe, especially during pregnancy. Limit exposure to smoke and ash whenever possible.
- ☐ If possible, avoid clean-up activities especially sifting through ash.
- ☐ Wash ash off your skin or mouth and rinse out of your eyes as soon as possible.





Pay Attention to any Symptoms

UNDERSTAND URGENT MATERNAL WARNING SIGNS

- ☐ Signs of pre or post eclampsia: (persistent headaches, dizziness, changes in your vision, extreme swelling of your hands, feet or face, upper right chest pain, trouble breathing)
- ☐ Fever of 100.4 or higher
- ☐ Thoughts of harming yourself or your baby
- ☐ Severe nausea and throwing up
- ☐ Severe belly pain that doesn't go away
- ☐ Abnormal vaginal discharge, or heavy bleeding before and/or after giving birth
- ☐ Baby's reduced movement outside of their typical patterns