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Air quality advisory
Stay indoors to avoid ill health effects from smoke

Fort Myers, FL—Lee County Health Department is advising residents and visitors to stay indoors and to avoid physical activity until smoke from wildfires burning in Collier County changes direction or clears.

Smoke is a mixture of gases and fine particles from burning trees and other plant materials. Smoke can hurt eyes, irritate the respiratory system, and worsen chronic heart and lung diseases.

Symptoms may worsen for people who have pre-existing conditions, such as respiratory allergies, asthma, and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD). People who have heart disease may experience chest pain, rapid heartbeat, shortness of breath and fatigue.

How much and how long a person is exposed to the smoke, as well as the person's age and degree of susceptibility play a role in determining whether or not someone will experience smoke-related health issues. Anyone experiencing a serious medical problem for any reason should seek medical treatment immediately.

If winds blow wildfire smoke into your area, limit exposure to the smoke. Take the following simple precautions to protect your health:

- Limit indoor air pollution--avoid burning candles or incense, using gas stoves, smoking tobacco or vacuuming.
- Do not rely solely on face masks. These masks will not protect your lungs from smoke.
- Anyone with asthma or other lung conditions should follow their respiratory management plan.

The general public can expect wildfire smoke to cause coughing, a scratchy throat, irritated sinuses, shortness of breath, chest pain, headaches, stinging eyes and a runny nose.

Specific strategies to decrease exposure to smoke include staying indoors whenever possible, using air conditioners (air conditioned homes usually have lower air exchange rates than homes that use open windows for ventilation), using mechanical air cleaners (i.e. hepa filtration), keeping windows closed while

driving in a vehicle, doing less strenuous physical activity (i.e. fast walking, rather than jogging) and minimizing other sources of air pollution.

Most persons who are exposed to thick smoke will not have health problems.

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