CEDARS-SINAI MEDICAL CENTER® **NEWS**

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WILDFIRE TIPSHEET

Zab Mosenifar, M.D., Medical Director, Women's Guild Lung Institute, Cedars-Sinai Medical Center

LOS ANGELES - Southern California's wildfires present special health hazards to humans and pets – especially children, the elderly, and those with chronic respiratory problems such as emphysema, asthma, congestive heart failure, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) and others. Zab Mosenifar, M.D., medical director of the Women's Guild Lung Institute at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center, offers the following tips:

1. Stay indoors as much as possible – and keep kids and pets inside, too. If you're a runner or participate in other types of exercise, do it indoors. If you must be outside, protect your lungs and airways by covering your nose and mouth with a wet towel or cloth.
2. If you have known respiratory problems, be sure to continue to use your inhaler.
3. If you have a home or room air filter, use it. If you don't have one, your home's (and your car's) air conditioning systems can help filter out particles in the air. Be sure your air conditioner filters are clean and that the system is set to the "recirculation" setting. This will allow your a/c to re-circulate the air inside the house rather than constantly bringing in outside air with smoke and small particles.
4. Children's lungs are much more vulnerable to smoke and particles. Kids who already have chronic respiratory problems should be sure to continue to use their inhalers.
5. Watch all children for signs of respiratory distress – coughing, wheezing, inability to catch their breath, etc. If these symptoms persist, seek medical assistance.
6. About 20 percent of the average population (those without known respiratory problems) will have "hyper-reactive airways" and will show serious short-term effects to the smoke and small particles.
7. Remember that small particles in the air can literally travel hundreds of miles. The area of immediate danger is within a 25-mile radius of the fire – depending on the winds.
8. When inhaled, smoke and small particles – which consist of water vapor, carbon monoxide, and ash – can cause both short-term and long-term damage to the airways and lungs.
9. These particles continue to float in the air for 10 days to two weeks after the fires have been completely extinguished, so plan to stay indoors as much as possible until that time.
10. Even if you cannot see the smoke and particles, be aware that they are still there – and still harmful. Small particles are approximately 1/20th the width of a single strand of hair, so they are far too small for the unassisted eye to see. Yet, they still can cause short-term and long-term damage.

PETS

1. Smoke and small particles in the air are just as harmful to animals as to humans. In fact, animals – especially dogs – can have an even stronger reaction to smoky air than humans.
2. Bring your animals inside until after the smoke danger is past. Remember, small particles will continue to float in the air for 10 days to two weeks after the fire is completely extinguished, so plan to keep your pets indoors until that time.
3. Don't run or exercise with your dogs. Because dogs exercise with their mouths completely open, they inhale large amounts of smoke and particles. Humans can breathe through the nose, which filters out

(more)

at least some of the particles, but dogs are unable to do that when exercising.

4. Watch your pets for signs of respiratory distress – coughing, wheezing, sneezing, inability to catch their breath, etc. If these symptoms persist, seek veterinary assistance.

WHEN TO SEEK MEDICAL ASSISTANCE

If you, your children or your pets are experiencing coughing, wheezing or an inability to catch your breath, and if these symptoms persist, seek medical assistance.

For more information, visit the Cedars-Sinai Medical Center Women's Guild Lung Institute website: (http://www.cedars-sinai.edu/1509.html)

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