

PUBLIC NOTICE

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SMOKE ALERT THROUGHOUT NUNAVIK

Kuujuuaq, July 14, 2021 – Plumes of smoke from forest fires in northwestern Ontario and eastern Manitoba have been crossing Nunavik since Tuesday morning. By Thursday, air quality may deteriorate if the smoke drops to ground level. This smoke contains fine particles that can penetrate deep into our lungs and bloodstream, sometimes causing serious health effects.

The people most vulnerable to the effects of smoke are:

- small children
- pregnant women
- elderly
- people with lung (like asthma, chronic bronchitis, emphysema), or heart conditions
- people involved in strenuous outdoor work or sports

During heavy smoke conditions, all Nunavimmiut are at risk regardless of their age or health.

Health effects of smoke exposure

Milder and more common symptoms of smoke exposure include:

- sore and watery eyes
- runny nose and sinus irritation
- scratchy throat and mild coughing
- headache

The following symptoms are less common, but are more serious**:

- shortness of breath
- wheezing (including asthma attacks)
- severe cough
- dizziness
- chest pains
- heart palpitations

If you experience any of these more severe symptoms, consult your nursing station (CLSC).

Protect your health

- Limit outdoor activity and strenuous physical activities as much as possible.
- If you have difficulty breathing, reduce your activities or stop altogether.
- Drink lots of water to help your body cope with the smoke.

At home:

- Reduce sources of indoor air pollution. Avoid:
 - Smoking
 - Vacuuming
 - burning incense and candles
 - using wood stoves

Prevent infiltration of outside air, by:

- keeping windows and doors closed, if it's not too hot
- setting the air exchange system to recirculation mode
- limiting the use of exhaust fans, when not cooking.

Check in on others who are in your care or live nearby who may be more vulnerable to smoke.

Source: Information adapted from Wildfire smoke and your health, Government of Canada.
<https://www.canada.ca/en/environment-climate-change/services/air-quality-health-index/wildfire-smoke/wildfire-smoke-health.html>

The Nunavik Regional Board of Health and Social Services is a public agency created in 1978 under the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement. It is responsible for nearly the entire Quebec territory located north of the 55th parallel in terms of the provision of health and social services for the inhabitants of the 14 communities.

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Source: Nunavik Regional Board of Health and Social Services

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