

Bushfires



For people with asthma living in high risk bushfire zones, the bushfire season is time to be on high alert for asthma symptoms.

Smoke and increased air pollution from fires can trigger asthma symptoms, as can high emotions such as stress, anxiety and crying.

If you have asthma, or if you are responsible for a child or elderly person with asthma, be aware of the risk and the fact that these triggers can linger long after the actual bushfire threat has subsided.

This is also critically important for the many hundreds of volunteers, emergency personnel and media representatives working within the fire zones.

Bushfire smoke and debris can trigger asthma symptoms, such as wheezing, coughing or chest tightness.

If asthma symptoms occur, don't delay:

- Follow your personal Written Asthma Action Plan
- If symptoms are getting worse then follow the First Aid for Asthma

You can download a copy of the First Aid for Asthma at www.nationalasthma.org.au

People in areas not directly impacted by the bushfires, including built up areas, are also at risk as winds can carry smoke and ash particles long distances. Try to reduce exposure to smoke by staying indoors with the doors and windows closed, doing as little outdoor activity as possible and using re-circulated air in the car.

Anyone with asthma living in a high risk bushfire zone should include asthma management in their fire safety survival plan:

- Make sure you have plenty of medication available to you
- If you decide to evacuate make sure your inhaler goes with you
- Always follow your personal Asthma Action Plan

More information

Victorian Government Department of Human Services:

http://www.health.vic.gov.au/environment/emergency_mgmnt/bushfire.htm

Information for health professionals

Increased presentations for asthma should be expected around fire zones and in other areas affected by smoke haze.

General practices and pharmacies in these areas should ensure they have good supplies of reliever medications and spacers, particularly for emergency use.