



Northern Inter-Tribal Health Authority Inc.



July 16, 2021 14:00HRS

Public Health Advisory – Forest Fire Smoke and High Temperatures

Northern Inter-Tribal Health Authority public health officials are reminding the public to take precautions as smoke from forest fires is creating poor air quality and rising temperatures are affecting many parts of the province, including northern Saskatchewan.

Smoke concentrations can vary widely as winds, fire behavior and temperatures change. Children, seniors, and those with heart or lung diseases, are potentially at risk. Heat-related illnesses include: heat rash (skin irritation), heat cramps (muscle cramps), heat edema (swelling of hands, feet, and ankles), heat fainting, heat exhaustion and heat stroke.

“Residents are reminded to monitor themselves for symptoms of smoke exposure and to seek medical attention when necessary, especially those with pre-existing respiratory conditions,” said NITHA Medical Health Officer Dr. Nnamdi Ndubuka. “Smoke exposure can cause headaches, shortness of breath, coughing and throat irritation.”

To avoid becoming ill during periods of poor air quality, and extreme temperatures:

- **If smoke is affecting air quality in your area**
 - Remain indoors during times that there is smoke in the air.
 - If you have fresh air shelters in your community, please utilize as directed by local health officials.
 - Keep doors and windows closed – if cooling is needed, use a fan or air-conditioning, if available.
- **Stay out of the heat**
 - Keep out of the sun during the peak hours of 11 a.m. - 3 p.m., if possible.
 - If you need to be outside, keep your exposure to smoke at a minimum, wear appropriate sunscreen, a hat, sunglasses and light, loose fitting cotton clothes.
 - Avoid any extreme physical exertion and keep in the shade whenever possible. Stay indoors when smoke is affecting the air quality.
 - If you don't have air conditioning at home, know where to go to cool down. Air conditioned public spaces include malls, leisure centres, libraries, etc.
- **Cool yourself down**
 - Stay hydrated with cold water and cold drinks, avoiding excess alcohol. Eat cold foods - salad and fruit with high water content is always a nice, light choice.
 - Take cool baths or showers.
- **Look out for others**
 - Keep an eye on isolated, elderly, ill or very young people and make sure they are able to stay indoors to avoid smoke and keep cool.
 - Ensure that babies, children, elderly people, and pets have minimum exposure to smoke, are not left alone in stationary vehicles, or unsupervised when near open water.
 - Check on elderly or sick neighbours, family or friends daily.

Increased symptoms from smoke that are greater than eye, nose or throat irritation, or symptoms indicating heat stroke could be a medical emergency. Call 9-1-1 or seek immediate medical assistance if you or someone you are caring for has a high body temperature and is either unconscious, confused or has stopped sweating.

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