

# Tip Sheet: What You Can Do

How People with Lung Disease Can Better Protect Themselves from the Health Risks of Climate Change

**Climate change harms human health now.** Warmer temperatures and longer, more intense wildfire seasons create more air pollution. Longer growing seasons produce more pollen. More severe weather from flooding, hurricanes, and tornadoes increases the risk of damage and loss of homes. **These threats pose special risks for people with lung disease.**

## How to Lower Your Risk

### Basics

- Get regular medical care and follow your doctor's orders for treatment and medications.
- Make sure you have a management plan to keep your best health. Ask your doctor to prepare one for you. Learn more about these plans [here](#) and [here](#).
- Keep all your medicines and tools, like peak flow meters, ready to go.
- If you use supplemental oxygen, get an alternative and portable source of power in case the electricity goes out. Tell your electricity provider to put you on a priority list for restoring power.
- Always keep plenty of water with you to drink.
- Pay attention to daily reports on air quality. For example, [www.airnow.gov](http://www.airnow.gov) gives current air quality information and forecasts for tomorrow.
- Limit your outside activities when air pollution is at levels considered "unhealthy for sensitive groups" (an "orange" day) or worse. People with lung diseases, older adults and children are considered "sensitive groups."
- Check the pollen level outdoors if you have allergies or pollen-triggered asthma.
- Stay indoors and keep windows and doors closed if high levels of air pollution are present outside.
- If your electricity goes off, keep any combustion-powered generators outdoors and at least 20 feet away from buildings.



Coordinating Partners:



Climate change poses special risks for people with lung disease.



## Evacuation Planning

No one wants to evacuate, but it's always a possibility. You should prepare for evacuation, especially if you live in an area at higher risk from flooding or wildfires.

- Follow instructions of local authorities.
- Keep supplies of medicines and breathing equipment ready. A good checklist can help make sure you don't forget anything.
- Gather prescriptions and insurance cards along with your treatment plan so you are ready to go.
- If needed, make sure you have portable electric power for any medical equipment or devices. You can recharge some devices in your car, but that may not work in all situations.
- Before you evacuate, try to find answers to these questions:
  - o How will you evacuate? Be sure that the car or bus driver understands your needs, especially if you need constant oxygen.
  - o Will your future location have electricity to power your equipment? If not, can you go somewhere that has power?
  - o Is there professional medical care in the new location?
- You may need family members, friends, or neighbors to help you. Don't be afraid to ask for help.

## Returning Home

When authorities say it is safe to return, people with lung disease should remember that risks will likely continue, especially after a flood or a forest fire. Be sure to take these steps:

- If smoke is still in the air, be sure to stay inside as much as possible. Pay even more attention to your symptoms.
- You may need help cleaning your home, yard, or workplace. After a flood, mold and chemicals in water can pose health risks. Ash after fires can contain not just wood dust, but other burned products from your home or garage. Do not add to the risks by burning debris.
- If rain or flooding has damaged materials, remember that keeping things dry is the key to mold control. If you can't clean and dry all wet materials within a day or two, remove and replace them. If you don't, mold will grow. More information is available [here](#).
- If electric power is still out, keep any combustion-powered generators outdoors and at least 20 feet away from buildings.
- More information is [here](#) on returning home.

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For more information on climate change  
and your lungs, go to  
[Lung.org/climate-change](https://www.lung.org/climate-change)

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