

## Managing Summer Air Quality and Wildfire Smoke: Tips for People with MCS

As we move into July, the warm weather and longer days often come with an invisible hazard—poor air quality. For individuals living with Multiple Chemical Sensitivity (MCS), this time of year can bring heightened health risks due to smog, wildfire smoke, and an increase in airborne pollutants. Managing these environmental exposures is essential to protecting health and maintaining well-being during the summer months.

### Understanding the Risks

Summer wildfires—whether local or distant—can significantly impact air quality across wide regions. The resulting smoke contains fine particles and volatile organic compounds (VOCs) that can easily infiltrate indoor environments.

Additionally, urban areas often experience spikes in ground-level ozone and smog, especially on hot, sunny days. For individuals with MCS, these pollutants can trigger a range of symptoms, including headaches, respiratory irritation, fatigue, and neurological distress.

### How to Track Air Quality

One of the best tools for managing exposure is staying informed. Daily air quality reports are available through local weather services and apps such as the *Air Quality Health Index (AQHI)*, *IQAir*, or *AirNow*.

These tools provide real-time data on pollutants, including PM2.5, ozone, and levels of wildfire smoke. Setting alerts for your area can help you know when to take precautions, such as staying indoors or adjusting ventilation strategies to protect yourself.

### Safeguarding Your Indoor Air

When outdoor air quality is poor, it's vital to maintain a clean and safe indoor environment. HEPA air purifiers can be highly effective in reducing fine particulate matter and allergens in the home. When selecting a device, make sure it is free from

chemical off-gassing and is adequate for the size of your space. Regular maintenance, including timely filter replacement, ensures optimal performance.

It's also important to seal windows and doors properly, especially during periods of heavy smoke, to prevent outdoor air from entering your living space. Using weather stripping or non-toxic window sealing materials can help reduce the risk. Avoid using standard duct tape or chemical sealants indoors, as they may contain irritants that can trigger MCS symptoms.

## Creating a “Clean Air Room”

For added protection, consider setting up a designated “clean air room” in your home. This is a space where air is filtered, surfaces are kept free of pollutants, and chemical exposures are minimized.

Choose a room with few soft furnishings and eliminate scented products, VOC-emitting materials, or unnecessary electronics. Run a HEPA air filter consistently in this space and limit foot traffic to reduce contaminants. In times of poor outdoor air quality, this room can serve as a safe haven where you can rest and recover.

## Conclusion

By staying informed and taking proactive steps, people with MCS can reduce their exposure to harmful air pollutants during the summer. As wildfire seasons become longer and air quality challenges increase, protecting your indoor environment is more important than ever. Stay safe, stay cool, and breathe easier this July.