**Exercise amongst wildfires!**

This past month has rocked our world, our lungs and our outdoor exercise routines. It’s a different experience exercising in a smoke infested world, and wearing that mask makes it even more difficult. What a crazy turn of events for our beautiful town, which usually benefits from fresh, clean air almost every day of the year.  
  
Exercising outside when there are environmental hazards in the air is not smart. It’s as simple as that. These wildfires have turned our clean air into a major problem for all who are breathing it. “Smoke from forest and grass fires contains particles that can irritate the eyes, throat and lungs. This can be bothersome for many people, but especially for those with compromised lungs.”  
  
Smoke can increase respiratory issues for both individuals with and without pre-existing respiratory conditions. Smoke will irritate the eyes and airways, causing coughing, a scratchy throat, irritated sinuses, headaches, stinging eyes or a runny nose. Seasonal allergies and increased pollen will be made worse by smoke.  
  
Individuals with heart disease might experience chest pain, palpitations, shortness of breath, or fatigue. People with lung disease may not be able to breathe as deeply or as vigorously as usual, and they may experience symptoms such as coughing, phlegm, chest discomfort, wheezing and shortness of breath.  
  
When smoke levels are high enough, like it’s been these past few weeks in Estes Park, even healthy people can experience some of these same symptoms. We’ve got to be more proactive with regards to outside activities. Here are the recommended guidelines for living within wildfire areas from the National Jewish Health Website.  
  
Continue to take your medications as prescribed, using your rescue inhaler if your doctor has recommended one. Stay indoors as much as possible. Limit exercising outdoors. Consider leaving the area if smoke is making you sick, until the air is clear again. Stay in touch with your doctor if respiratory and chest symptoms become severe.  
  
Protecting yourself is what’s most important. It really is important to try to limit your exposure to the smoke. Pay attention to local air quality reports by staying alert to news and health warnings related to smoke. Use visibility guides, where they are available. Use common sense if it looks smoky outside then stay inside. It’s probably not a good time to be outdoors for any activity.  
  
If you are advised to stay indoors, take steps to keep indoor air as clean as possible. Keep our windows and doors closed. Run your air conditioner or air purifying systems, keeping intakes and filters clean if possible. Close your fireplace dampers vents. Keep particle levels inside your home lower, by not burning wood fireplaces, gas logs, gas stoves or even candles. Don’t vacuum, it stirs up particles already inside your home and don’t smoke which puts even more pollution in your lungs and the lungs of people around you. When driving through smoky areas, car windows and vents should be kept closed with your air conditioning set to “recirculate” to avoid bringing in outside air.  
  
Smoke inhalation can be serious, and the long-term effects of breathing smoke correlates with some serious health issues, including shortened life spans. Healthy individuals are at little risk for any long-term effects from breathing wildfire smoke for a temporary amount of time. Once the exposure to smoke goes away, so should your symptoms.  
  
Firefighters and other safety personnel are at risk for health concerns due to long-term exposure as they work endlessly to put out wildfires. Smoke inhalation, long working hours, and scorching temperatures all contribute to health concerns. Long-term respiratory problems could be seen down the road, such as decreased lung function, although these effects can be reversed with proper care. The proper use of personal protective equipment is very important in limiting the effects of smoke exposure.  
  
With regards to your exercise, do not exercise outside at these times and don’t avoid exercise by using the smoke as an excuse to take a break. Stay inside; find a health club with a daily or weekly rate and one that has an air conditioning system that can protect your lungs.  
  
MedX is open, airconditioned and disinfected beyond any other facility. We hope to see you back inside soon!!