

## Protect Your Lung Health from Volcanic Ash

The emissions from a volcano's eruption present lung health hazards for people living and working in surrounding areas. Volcanic ash, a type of particulate matter air pollution, and vog, a mixture of dangerous gases and fine particles, can spew into the air for miles downwind of the eruption. Volcanic ash and vog can worsen lung disease and increase the risk of premature death. To best protect your health here are a few tips:

**Stay indoors and protect the air in your home.** Until the ash and vog settles keep doors, windows and fireplace dampers shut and preferably with clean air circulating through air conditioners on the recirculation setting. Place damp towels at door thresholds and tape drafty windows.

**Prepare to evacuate if directed.** Those with chronic lung disease are encouraged to gather all of their medications, delivery devices, prescriptions and insurance cards in one spot so that can quickly be transported in the event of an evacuation. As you evacuate remember to follow precautions around COVID-19 such as wearing a cloth face covering and practicing social distancing.

**Monitor vog, which contains dangerous gases and particles.** Wind can move vog far away from the initial volcanic eruption, and threaten your health, Check weather reports to monitor wind direction.



**Take precautions for kids and older adults.** Extra precaution should be taken for children, older adults and people with lung disease, who are more susceptible to gases and smoke. Others who face greater risk include people with cardiovascular disease or diabetes.

**Don't depend on a dust mask.** Ordinary dust masks, designed to filter out large particles, will not help as they still allow the more dangerous smaller particles to pass through. No mask will protect you from the harmful gases in vog. Masks with a HEPA filter or an N-95 will filter out the damaging fine particles in volcanic ash.

**If you are worried about your family's lung health and have questions, call 1-800-LUNGUSA to talk to American Lung Association health professionals.**

**Contact a physician immediately if asthma or COPD symptoms get worse and not relieved by usual medications. Be aware of any breathing problems that may arise, including:**

- Wheezing
- Shortness of breath
- Difficulty taking a full breath
- Chest heaviness or tightness
- Cough that keeps you up at night
- Fatigue

