

MEDIA RELEASE

For immediate release

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| From: | Bill Lane, Media Manager, Mercy Health Ph: 0477 720 337 |
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**Victorians urged to take precautions against bushfire smoke**

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| Victorians are urged to take precautions against the dangers of inhaling the bushfire smoke that is blanketing the state.  The elderly, children and people with asthma, emphysema and heart disease are at a greater risk of being affected by the smoke, while pregnant women are also urged to take additional care.  People can guard against exposure to smoke by taking some simple precautions:   * Stay inside your house if possible; close all windows and doors * If you use an air conditioner, switch it to “recycle” or “recirculate” * Avoid exercise * Ordinary paper dust masks and handkerchiefs will not filter out fine particles from bushfire smoke – use a special P2 or N95 filter mask, which you can buy at hardware stores. Be sure it fits properly and you do not have any medical issues that would prevent use. Information on how to properly fit P2 masks is available [here](https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/Api/downloadmedia/%7B33C98FC3-28B5-4DD7-A06A-81A98025A9F9%7D).   Ambulance Victoria Acting Director of Emergency Management Justin Dunlop said Ambulance Victoria had seen an increase in the number of people reporting breathing problems as a result of the smoke in recent days. He said those showing signs of serious smoke inhalation are encouraged to seek professional medical advice from a GP or paramedic.  Symptoms of smoke inhalation can include itchy eyes, sore throat and runny nose through to shortness of breath, coughing, vomiting, nausea, and confusion.  ‘If you have asthma or a lung condition and you develop symptoms such as shortness of breath, coughing or wheezing, please follow your asthma action plan,’ Mr Dunlop said.  ‘If you are showing signs of a serious smoke inhalation injury you should be assessed immediately by a medical professional such as a paramedic or a GP. Anyone with less urgent concerns about their health should seek medical advice or call NURSE-ON-CALL on 1300 60 60 24.’  Information on air quality can be found on EPA's AirWatch site [here](https://www.epa.vic.gov.au/for-community/airwatch). |

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