



Smoke inhalation

You came to the emergency department after breathing in smoke. The doctor checked your breathing and oxygen level and thinks you are well enough to go home. Some problems can appear up to 1 to 2 days later.

What is it?

Smoke contains hot gases, soot and chemicals that can irritate your throat and lungs. It can also contain carbon monoxide, a poisonous gas you cannot see or smell. Common effects are a sore throat, cough, hoarse voice, black mucus and mild headache. These usually settle within a few days. Rarely, swelling of the airway or lungs develops later.

Looking after yourself at home

- Have an adult stay with you for the next 24 hours if possible.
- Rest and avoid hard physical activity for a few days.
- Do not smoke, and stay away from smoke, dust and strong fumes.
- Drink plenty of fluids. Warm drinks or honey may ease a sore throat.
- Coughing up black or grey mucus for a day or two is common and expected.
- Make sure your home has a working smoke alarm.

Medicines

- If you were given an inhaler, use it as your doctor or pharmacist showed you.
- Paracetamol can help a sore throat or headache, unless your doctor told you not to. Follow the packet.

Follow-up

- See your family doctor or health centre if your cough or hoarse voice lasts more than 1 week.
- If you have asthma or lung disease, see your family doctor within 2 to 3 days.

Come back to the emergency department or call an ambulance straight away if:

- Breathing that is getting harder, or noisy breathing
- A hoarse voice or trouble swallowing that is getting worse
- Coughing up blood, or black mucus that is getting worse after the first day
- Chest pain or tightness
- A bad headache, vomiting, confusion or unusual drowsiness
- Blue or grey lips



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This leaflet is general information to support the advice your doctor or nurse gave you today. It does not replace their advice. If you are worried, seek medical help.

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