

Protect yourself from dust and soil particles

Dust can arise due to dry conditions in areas that were impacted by Hurricane Helene and can cause health issues for some people. NCDHHS recommends following these tips to the best extent possible to reduce exposure to dust.

Who is at risk?

Breathing in dust and particulate matter can affect anyone's health. However, the groups listed below are at higher risk for health issues. If you belong to one or more of these sensitive groups, take extra care to protect yourself.

- People with underlying health conditions like asthma, COPD or heart conditions
- Older adults
- Children
- Pregnant people
- People who are likely to have more exposure to dust or particulate matter, such as people who work or exercise outside, are unhoused or do not have access to clean air at home or at work

What are the symptoms of dust and particulate matter exposures?

- Mild cough
- Runny nose
- Watery or dry eyes
- Sinus irritation
- Sore throat
- Wheezing or shortness of breath
- Headaches
- Fatigue
- Asthma attacks
- Severe or persistent coughing
- Chest pain
- Fast or irregular heartbeat

Consider the following steps to reduce your exposure to dust and particulate matter, particularly if you are at higher risk for health issues:

- Stay indoors and keep windows and doors closed.
- If your home is too hot or has poor air quality, go to a designated public building with air conditioning and air filtration systems, like community centers, libraries or shopping malls.
- If you need to be outside in areas where there is a lot of dust, consider wearing an N95 or KN95 mask. Talk to your health care provider before using an N95/KN95 mask if you have heart or lung problems. N95/KN95 masks are not recommended for children.
 - **At hardware or home supply stores, look for a mask with NIOSH approval and an N95 rating. Both labels should be on the mask and the packaging.**
 - **More info on NIOSH approved N95 masks, also called filtering facepiece respirators: www.cdc.gov/niosh/nppt/topics/respirators/disp_part/default.html**
 - **N95 masks do not protect against gases, vapors or odors.**
 - **Do not use masks with beards, facial hair or other conditions that interfere with the face to facepiece seal.**

