



Heart-Healthy Tips: Improve Your Lung Health

Over 35 million people in the U.S. suffer from a lung disease. As a firefighter, you face many occupational dangers to your respiratory system, including exposure to smoke, carbon monoxide, and particle matter and debris from building collapses, as well as potential contact with toxic materials that cause chronic diseases, such as asbestos. In addition, many firefighters put added strain on their lungs by smoking tobacco products or being exposed to second-hand smoke. Use these tips from the Heart-Healthy Firefighter Program to lower your risk of lung disease today.

Tips for Lung Health:

- ▶ If you smoke, evaluate and implement a plan to quit. Use the resources from the Put it Out campaign to help you quit: www.healthy-firefighter.org/putitout
- ▶ Commit to increasing exercise activities to strengthen your lung capacity.
- ▶ If you have problems breathing or have a persistent cough, make an appointment to visit your physician.
- ▶ Make sure all breathing apparatus are cleaned and sanitized correctly, and that they are working properly for the next time they are needed. Make sure your department provides and requires the proper use of full personal protective equipment.
- ▶ If anyone around you smokes, encourage them to quit or to smoke outside. Secondhand smoke is just as dangerous as firsthand. Consider making your station a smoke-free workplace.
- ▶ Be educated on hazmat risks. Be sure when you get a call to be aware of any toxic chemicals that might be in the air. Make sure all members are educated on the proper way to handle these materials to avoid inhalation.
- ▶ Check to make sure air conditioning filters are changed regularly in your home and at the station. Make sure all air vents are working properly and are dust-free.
- ▶ Talk to your doctor about your risk, and make sure to mention any situations that you have been in where you might have been exposed to harmful substances. Know the risk factors of lung cancer and other lung diseases, and see your healthcare professional as soon as you realize that there may be a problem. Early detection is the first step to surviving any disease.
- ▶ Buy a pollutant test kit, which are available at many home goods stores, to test for airborne chemicals and toxins in your home and at the station.
- ▶ Ask a local home inspector to check the station for asbestos. Encourage department members to get their own homes checked.