



Sandstorms and dust storms

Sand and dust storms can arrive suddenly, cutting visibility on roads and irritating lungs and eyes. This page helps families protect their health at home, drive safely, and clean up once the dust settles.

CHECKLIST

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| ☐ Face masks, with spares to change often | ☐ Asthma inhalers and prescribed medicines |
| ☐ Protective glasses or goggles | ☐ Prescribed antihistamines for severe allergy sufferers |
| ☐ Towels to dampen and seal door and window gaps | ☐ Spare masks kept in the car |

BEFORE

- Follow weather forecasts and official dust warnings so you are not caught out.
- If anyone has asthma or allergies, agree a plan with their doctor and keep medicine on hand.
- Keep face masks at home and in the car.
- Know that storms can hit as a sudden wall of dust and usually pass within minutes.

DURING

- Stay indoors and only go out if you really need to.
- Shut doors and windows tightly and block gaps with damp towels.
- Outside, cover nose and mouth with a mask or damp cloth and change it often.
- Do not rub your eyes. Wear protective glasses if you must be outdoors.
- People with asthma or lung disease should stay inside and take medicine as prescribed.
- Avoid open spaces at the peak of the storm and when visibility is poor.
- Wash your face, nose and mouth often.

AFTER

- Clean dust thoroughly from the home, especially bedrooms, sheets and blankets.
- See a doctor for persistent coughing, wheezing or watery eyes.
- Go to the emergency department straight away for any difficulty breathing.
- Keep checking forecasts, as more dust may follow.

IF YOU ARE DRIVING

- Avoid driving into a dust storm if at all possible.
- Close all windows and set air conditioning to recirculate or off to keep dust out.
- If dust is thick, pull right off the road, stop and set the handbrake.
- Once parked off the road, turn off all lights and take your foot off the brake so others do not follow you.
- Never stop in a driving lane. Keep your seatbelt on.
- If you cannot pull off, slow right down, use lights and follow the road markings.

IN THE UAE

Gulf health ministries advise elderly people, asthma patients and anyone with recent eye or nose surgery to stay indoors during sandstorms.

MY NOTES

Sources: Saudi Ministry of Health, MOH Directs Safety Tips to Avert the Dust Storm Hitting Some of KSA Regions (<https://www.moh.gov.sa/en/ministry/mediacenter/news/pages/news-2013-03-18-001.aspx>); US National Weather Service (NOAA), Dust Storm Safety (<https://www.weather.gov/safety/wind-dust-storm>); Ready Illinois (Illinois Emergency Management Agency), Dust Storms Fact Sheet (https://ready.illinois.gov/content/dam/soi/en/web/ready/plan/documents/DustStorms_Factsheet.pdf); Qatar Tribune (report of Qatar Ministry of Public Health advice, Aug 2016), MoPH gives tips to stay safe during sandstorms (<https://www.qatar-tribune.com/article/17164/NATION/MoPH-gives-tips-to-stay-safe-during-sandstorms>)
General guidance in our own words. Always follow your local authorities.