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# North County Fire Authority Health & Wellness Newsletter

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## Topics:

- **Compassion Fatigue**
- **Signs/Symptoms**
- **Effective Interventions**
- **Healthy Recipe**

## Staying Healthy

Take 30 minutes each day for yourself to exercise or find personal ways of relaxation.

## Workout Tip

### Get inspired

Find an exercise that is satisfying.

## What is Compassion Fatigue?

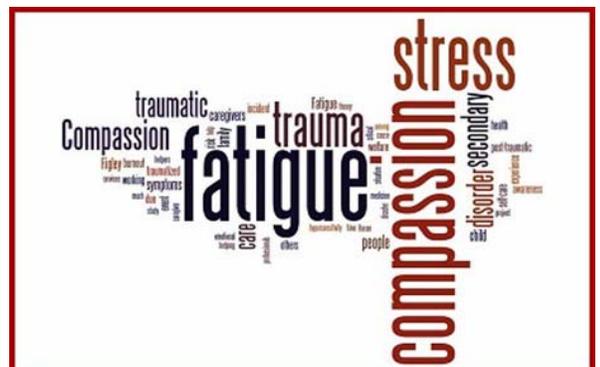
Compassion Fatigue refers to the intense emotional and physical exhaustion that helping professionals can develop over the course of their career. We all cross paths with human beings when they are at their worst; domestic abuse, death, tragic auto accidents, mental health emergencies and emergencies involving children. All of us who help others in our profession; firefighters, paramedics, police officers, teachers, nurses, social workers and physicians to name a few, have great risk to be a victim of compassion fatigue. This is the ongoing destruction of all the things that keep us connected to others in our profession by helping others through empathy and hope. When we suffer from compassion fatigue, we start experiencing undesirable changes in our personal and professional lives.

Often helping professionals who appear non-caring, burned out and fatigued tend to work more such as multiple days on or working extended hours. Professionals that cannot identify their risk of compassion fatigue and maintain a healthy work life balance tend to worsen over time leading to serious physical and mental health difficulties such as depression, anxiety, substance abuse, chronic pain, other stress-related illnesses and even suicide.

## Signs/Symptoms of Compassion Fatigue

Anger working with certain clients  
 Cynicism  
 Depression  
 Diminished sense of career enjoyment  
 Distancing or social withdrawal  
 Emotional exhaustion  
 Feeling professional helplessness  
 Negative self-image  
 Reduced ability to feel sympathy & empathy  
 Resentment  
 Sleep disturbances  
 Lost touch with hobbies, sports & activities they used to enjoy

We can become disheartened & increasingly hostile at work which may contribute to a toxic work environment. Not feeling engaged can show we are more prone to work errors and lose a respectful stance towards those we serve in our community and to our co-workers. At home, we tend to become short-tempered with our family and friends.



## Effective Interventions to Combat Compassion Fatigue include:

- Track your physical and emotional well-being
- Travel or vacations to relax and expand your mind to experience the world
- Communication and emotional support from peers
- Communication with family
- Counseling
- Effective work-life balance
- Exercise
- Professional learning
- Socialization
- Spiritual development
- Use of Critical Incident Stress Teams

### *Healthy Recipe*

## Roast Chicken with Pomegranate Glaze

Yields approximately 6 servings

### Ingredients

- 1 tbs. ground sumac or 2 tsp. of freshly grated lemon zest
- 1 tbs. kosher salt
- 1 4-lb. chicken
- 6 c. sliced, cored fennel (2-3 large bulbs)
- 1 large yellow onion, chopped
- 2 tsp. olive oil
- 1/2 c. pomegranate molasses
- 2 tbs. honey
- 1 tsp. ground pepper
- Pomegranate seeds for garnish

### Directions

1. Preheat the oven to 425 degrees F.
2. Combine sumac or lemon zest and salt in a small bowl. Clean chicken. Loosen the skin over the breast & thigh meat and rub

the spice mixture under the skin plus a little on the skin. Tuck wings & tie the legs together.

3. Combine fennel and onion in a large roasting pan and toss with olive oil to coat. Place the chicken, breast-side up, on the vegetables.
4. Combine the pomegranate molasses, honey, pepper in a small bowl. Transfer half the mixture to a small saucepan and set aside to serve with the chicken.
5. Roast the chicken and vegetables for 20 minutes. Turn the chicken over, stir the vegetables and cook for 20 minutes more.
6. Turn the chicken over one more time (so it's breast-side up) and stir the vegetables again. Reduce the oven temperature to 400 degrees. Brush the chicken all over with the remaining pomegranate mixture and

continue to roast for another 20-30 minutes or until cooked through.

7. Transfer the chicken to a clean cutting board and let rest for 10 minutes. Meanwhile, heat the pomegranate glaze in the saucepan over low heat. Remove the strings from the chicken and carve the chicken. Serve with the fennel and onion, drizzled with the warm glaze. Sprinkle with pomegranate seeds, if desired.

Recipe provided by [EatingWell.com](http://EatingWell.com)



# \*Cyanide in Fire Smoke: Fact or Fiction?

For the last two years, the Fire Smoke Coalition has conducted on-site training sessions throughout the United States, United Kingdom and Ireland. The focus: fire smoke, and more specifically, the reality of the deadly impact it has within the firefighter population, how to prevent exposure with air management and atmospheric monitoring and if the exposure occurs, how to appropriately identify what toxicants may be on board to provide effective emergent treatment. Based on outcomes and evaluations, the training has been tremendously successful, and many departments have in fact changed SOGs. However, there are hundreds of departments that have done very little, if anything, to change tactical operations on the fireground to address the lethal impact of today's fire smoke.

This summary is based on fire smoke and specifically "cyanide" because that seems to be the word that creates insurmountable confusion and push-back. However, it also seems to be the only toxic gas singled out by medical researchers as "deadly" and "lethal."

For the last 35 years, physicians, scientists, researchers and U.S. fire service authorities have been publishing articles about the change in fire smoke and the deadly introduction of cyanide — not as a hazardous material chemical, but as a "gas" created through the incomplete combustion of laminates, foams, synthetics and plastics — new to homes in the last 30 years. This is truly not a NEW topic. The majority of what follows should be considered simply a compilation of data and research throughout the world focused on the introduction of hydrogen cyanide—a gas—to fire smoke.

The civilian population continues to suffer smoke inhalation deaths at a much greater rate than firefighters because they are exposed to the incipient stage of the fire when the toxic gases are at peak levels. Despite the amount of fires in the U.S. decreasing each year, the amount of civilians dying in fires is actually increasing. For example, in 2009, 1,348,500 fires were attended by public fire departments, a decrease of 7.1 percent from the year before; however, 3,010 civilian fire deaths occurred, which is an increase of 9.3 percent. A logistical conclusion could be that fire smoke has become so noxious it is almost impossible for civilians to survive—or that the escape time has greatly diminished given the toxicity of fire smoke today versus 30 years ago.

Obviously, firefighters aren't exposed to the combustion process, but instead to the gases emitted from smoldering debris following the fire because the culture has been to come off air as soon as the fire is out. However, the firefighters are now plagued with cancers, death and cardiac-related illnesses like never before. So, one could surmise that the culture of continually exposing one's self to the off-gassing of plastics, synthetics, laminates and foams can be just as deadly as the combustion process itself through chronic exposure.

Without air or the process by which the atmosphere is deemed safe, acute and chronic exposures to the toxicants and gases in fire smoke beg the onset of illness, disease and death. Interesting to note is that in 2004, the International Association of Fire Chiefs was investigating the matter of cyanide poisoning as an undervalued risk associated with smoke inhalation and "... *an area where firefighters and emergency responders could benefit from further education and training,*" said John Sinclair, Chairman, EMS Section, International Association of Fire Chiefs. "Additional education and training would be beneficial to EMS Personnel so that smoke inhalation victims could be treated at the scene of exposure; and would also be beneficial to firefighters, so that they could adequately protect themselves from this very toxic agent." While it's not solely the responsibility of the IAFC to recommend change, it is an organization that can carry a message especially when it could be a life-saving message. Unfortunately, 8 years later, virtually nothing has occurred to generate life-saving changes relative to this deadly topic.

**\*Excerpt from Fire Smoke Coalition. To read the full article—**

**[http://www.firesmoke.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/Cyanide-in-Fire-Smoke\\_v1.pdf](http://www.firesmoke.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/Cyanide-in-Fire-Smoke_v1.pdf)**