

Smog Advisory Today: Even healthy kids are vulnerable.

Smog is the direct result of human activity – air emissions from our homes, businesses and vehicles. Smog is a year-round issue that can affect everyone's health, but children – even healthy children – are at high risk. Kids may inhale more air pollutants since they tend to spend more time outdoors, are generally more active and have higher breathing rates than adults.

What parents should know

Poor air quality can affect children's lung development. Early damage could increase the risk of respiratory disease in adult life.

Children exposed to high levels of smog may suffer from: reduced lung capacity, more pneumonia, bronchitis and other lung infections, more asthma attacks and worse symptoms.



Warning Signs

Warning signs that smog may be harming your kids include:

- Difficulty breathing
- Chest tightness and coughing
- Headache
- Eye, nose and throat irritation
- Aggravation of respiratory diseases (such as asthma)
- Low energy

For more information on the impacts of smog on your children's health, visit:

www.health.gov.on.ca/english/public/pub/pubhealth/smog.html

Other groups may also experience health problems at lower levels of air pollution:

- People with lung diseases and heart conditions
- People who play sports or exercise outdoors
- Pregnant women
- People with asthma
- Seniors
- Smokers



How can I protect my kids?

Listen and watch for smog alerts on the news especially during traditional smog season – from May to September. You can also subscribe to Ontario's *Smog Alert Network* at www.airqualityontario.com and receive free smog notifications by e-mail.

To find the current air quality in your community go to www.airqualityontario.com or call 1-800-387-7768 (English); 1-800-221-8852 (French).

If a smog advisory is issued in your community:

- Reduce outdoor activity levels when smog levels are high.
- Avoid or reduce exercising near areas of heavy traffic, because motor vehicles are a primary source of air pollution.
- If your child suffers from asthma or other respiratory or cardiac illness, speak with your physician about how to best manage their condition.
- Make sure your child's teachers, coaches and camp directors are aware of the health risks of air pollution, and have policies in place to protect the kids when air quality is unhealthy.
- If your child experiences any breathing difficulties or respiratory complications, contact your physician or go to the nearest hospital.

If your child has a heart or lung condition, talk to your health care professional about additional ways to protect your child's health when smog levels are high.



Reduce Smog, Reduce the Risk

Whenever we burn fuel, we create the pollutants necessary to form smog. We burn oil and gas to power our cars and to heat and cool our homes. Reducing your energy consumption helps prevent smog.

Actions you can take to reduce smog:

At home:

- Conserve electricity by turning off lights and the air conditioner when not in use.
- Limit the amount of wood you burn in your fireplace or wood stove and use only the dry, seasoned variety.
- Try manual, instead of gasoline-powered equipment.
- Reduce your use of oil-based products such as paints, solvents or cleaners if you can avoid them. They contain volatile organic compounds (VOCs), which contribute to smog.
- Ensure you schedule regular car maintenance.



At work:

- Take public transit or walk to work.
- Encourage and facilitate carpooling.
- Avoid traffic congestion.
- Consider teleconferencing instead of travelling to meetings.

