

# Smog Advisory Today:

## The risk to seniors.

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 seniors are especially vulnerable.

### Why do health risks increase for seniors?

Seniors face greater health risks from smog because poor air quality can aggravate pre-existing heart and lung conditions. Those suffering from asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, emphysema, bronchitis, heart disease or hardening of the arteries should be especially cautious. The combination of smog and smoking is especially harmful to your health.

### How can I tell if I am being affected by smog?

On smog days, light activities, like gardening can be considered heavy exertion. Know your limits and pay attention to how you are feeling.

Early warning signs of smog include:

- Mild breathing difficulties
- Chest tightness and coughing
- Headache
- Eye, nose and throat irritation
- Low energy or feeling unusually tired; a chore that usually seems easy could prove more strenuous
- Aggravation of respiratory diseases (such as asthma)

If you experience these symptoms, reduce your activity level and exposure.



## What can I do to protect my health?

Listen and watch for smog alerts on the news especially during traditional smog season – from May to September.

### *If a smog advisory is issued in your community:*

- Avoid or minimize time spent outdoors.
- Avoid or minimize strenuous physical activities outdoors.
- Avoid or reduce exercising near areas of heavy traffic.
- If you suffer from asthma or other respiratory or cardiac illness, speak with your physician about how to best manage your condition.
- If you experience any breathing difficulties or respiratory complications, contact your physician or go to the nearest hospital.

If you have a heart or lung condition, talk to your health care professional about additional ways to protect your 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.



### At work:

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

To receive free smog notifications by e-mail or to find the current air quality in your community go to [www.airqualityontario.com](http://www.airqualityontario.com) or call 1-800-387-7768 (English); 1-800-221-8852 (French).

For more information on the impacts of smog on your health, visit: [www.health.gov.on.ca/english/public/pub/pubhealth/smog.html](http://www.health.gov.on.ca/english/public/pub/pubhealth/smog.html)