Santa Barbara County Air Pollution Control District

FACT SHEET

Air Pollution and Health for Seniors

Asthma, respiratory illness, and heart conditions are aggravated by pollutants in the air.

- **Ozone:** Ozone is a primary ingredient in smog. Studies indicate that exposure to ground-level ozone air pollution, even at very low levels, can cause a number of respiratory health effects. Ozone irritates the respiratory system, reduces lung function, can make asthma symptoms worse, and can inflame and damage the lining of the lung.
- **Particular Matter:** Fine mineral, metal, soot, smoke, and dust particles suspended in the air can permanently lodge in the deepest and most sensitive areas of the lung, and can aggravate many respiratory illnesses including asthma, bronchitis, and emphysema. High levels of particle pollution have also been associated with a higher incidence of heart problems, including heart attacks.

When and where am I most at risk?

During poor air quality days

Near a wildfire

Oftentimes indoors if the proper precautions are not taken

If you live in a retirement community, find out how protected you are from indoor and outdoor air pollution:

Are the air filters in your heating and cooling systems changed as often as the manufacturers' recommend?

Does the maintenance staff properly use cleaning products?

Are your gas and combustion appliances properly ventiliated?

Does your landscaping service use electric leaf blowers and lawnmowers?

Check www.OurAir.org for updates, and see reverse for more information.

Smoke, Air Pollution and Our Health

FACT SHEET

What should I do during a wildfire or poor air quality days?

1. Check www.OurAir.org for smoke advisories and updates. But also use common sense. If it smells smoky outside, it's not a good time for you to be outdoors.
2. If you are advised to stay indoors, keep indoor air as clean as possible. Keep your windows and doors closed — unless it's extremely hot outside. If you have an air conditioner, run it with the fresh air intake closed and the filter clean. Don't use fireplaces, gas logs, or candles, don't vacuum, and don't smoke.
3. When smoke is heavy for a prolonged period of time, fine particles can build up indoors even though you may not be able to see them. If you have heart or lung disease or are an older adult, talk with your doctor about whether and when you should leave the area.
4. Be sure to call your doctor if your symptoms worsen. Pay attention to local air quality reports and stay alert to any news coverage or health warnings related to smoke.
5. If you have heart or lung disease, such as congestive heart failure, angina, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, emphysema or asthma, you may experience health effects earlier and at lower smoke levels than healthy people. Older adults are more likely to be affected by smoke, possibly because they are more likely to have heart or lung diseases than younger people. Children also are more susceptible to smoke for several reasons: their respiratory systems are still developing; they breathe more air (and air pollution) per pound of body weight than adults; and they're more likely to be active outdoors.

What about the air indoors?

The household products we use every day as well as appliances, furtniture, and building materials emit gases that can become trapped indoors.Many of these gases are pollutants that are harmful to health.

- Reduce sources of pollutants. Don't smoke indoors, keep the room free of dust and pet dander, and use safe cleaning products.
- *Ventilate.* Open windows and doors to allow air to circulate when the air outside is clean.
- *Filter.* Remove pollutants with an appropriate air cleaner. However, you should **never use indoor air cleaners that generate ozone**. Select a mechanical air cleaner with a fiber or fabric filter. High Efficiency Particulate Air (HEPA) filters are the most efficient. Filters should be tightly sealed in their containers and cleaned or replaced regularly.

You Can Learn More…

Visit our website at www.OurAir.org or call us at (805) 961-8800