Air Quality and Pregnancy

When you’re pregnant, poor air quality may affect both you and your baby. This handout will help you know what you can do to have a healthier pregnancy.

### What we know
Poor air quality has been linked to:
- Baby born too early
- Baby born too small
- Baby with lung problems

### What we are studying
Scientists are trying to learn whether poor air quality may be related to these conditions:
- Miscarriage
- Birth defects
- Autism disorders

The Air Quality Index (AQI) is a number for reporting how clean or unhealthy your air is every day.

You can find it on the Internet at AirNow.gov. It’s also reported in local news sources:

When AQI is:

- **1–50** GOOD
  - Enjoy usual outdoor activities

- **51–100** MODERATE
  - Do less outdoor activity — not as long, not as hard. If you are coughing or don’t feel well, stay indoors.

- **101–150** UNHEALTHY for sensitive groups
  - Reduce or avoid outdoor exercise

- **151–200** UNHEALTHY for all
  - Avoid outdoor exercise

- **201–300** VERY UNHEALTHY for all
  - Plan outdoor activities in the morning, when air quality is usually better

| Traffic pollution is harmful even when AQI is good |
| If you can, avoid outdoor air in places with a lot of traffic |

If you have asthma, be sure to take your asthma medication all through your pregnancy.

You are breathing for two!
What causes poor air quality?

**Particulate matter** is tiny particles in the air like dust, dirt, soot, and smoke. In northern Utah, it’s more common and more problematic in winter months.

**Ground-level ozone** is a colorless gas. It forms when polluted air comes in contact with heat and sunlight. This is more common in summer and late afternoon.

What can you do to help? Drive less. Carpool or take public transit.

What causes poor air quality indoors?

**Wood burning — inside or outside.** Don’t burn trash or plastics.

**Cigarette smoke.** Don’t smoke. Stay away from others who are smoking.

**Paint fumes.** Use “zero VOC” or “no VOC” paint.

**Cleaning chemicals.** Use natural cleaning products.

**Carbon monoxide (CO) from fuel-burning appliances.** Put a CO alarm in your home.

What can I do to help?

- Use natural cleaning products.
- Put a CO alarm in your home.

Other things you can do to help

**Pay attention to how you feel** both indoors and outdoors. Sometimes polluted air feels like normal pregnancy symptoms. If you think air quality may be playing a role in your symptoms, talk to your doctor.

**If you smoke, quit.** Call 1-800-QUIT NOW for help. And don’t be in rooms or cars where people are smoking.

**Ask the people around you for support.** If you think there is unhealthy air in the place you live or work, ask other people there to support you in making a change.

For more information, see the document “Promoting Good Prenatal Health: Air Pollution and Pregnancy” from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)