

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:

A pregnant woman should:

1-50

GOOD



Enjoy usual outdoor activities



51-100

MODERATE



Do less outdoor exercise — not as long, not as hard

If you're coughing or you don't feel well, stay indoors

101-150

UNHEALTHY

for sensitive groups



Exercise indoors



Plan outdoor activities in the morning, when air quality is usually better

151-200

UNHEALTHY

for all

201-300

VERY UNHEALTHY

for all



Traffic pollution is harmful even when AQI is good

If you can, avoid outdoor air in places with a lot of traffic

What causes poor air quality outdoors?



Smoke stacks



Wood burning — inside or outside



Cars and trucks

Blowing dust

Many things cause poor air. Most come from car and truck exhaust.

Particulate matter is tiny particles in the air like dust, dirt, soot, and smoke. In northern Utah, particulate matter is more common in winter months.

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

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

What causes poor air quality indoors? What can I do to help?



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.**

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, search online the document "Promoting Good Prenatal Health: Air Pollution and Pregnancy" from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).