

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

51-100
MODERATE

101-150
UNHEALTHY
for sensitive groups

151-200
UNHEALTHY
for all

201-300
VERY UNHEALTHY
for all

During pregnancy, you should:



Enjoy usual outdoor activities



Do less outdoor activity — not as long, not as hard.
If you are coughing or don't feel well, stay indoors.



Reduce or avoid outdoor exercise

Avoid outdoor exercise



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?



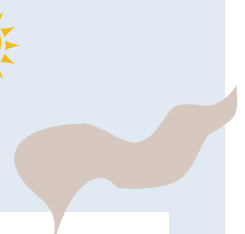
Smoke stacks



Wood burning—
inside or outside



Cars and trucks



Blowing dust


Both particulate matter and ground-level ozone make asthma worse

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