



Pregnancy, Babies and Wildfire Smoke

When the smoke rolls into our valley it affects all of us. **Because children’s lungs are still developing, babies, children (especially under 5), and pregnant women are particularly sensitive to smoke.** We don’t have control over wildfire smoke, but there are things we can do to stay healthy.

What’s the problem?

Wildfire smoke contains small particulate matter called PM2.5, which can get into our lungs and bloodstream. Several studies have linked PM 2.5 to harm to babies when they’re still in the womb. The research isn’t clear if fetuses are harmed directly through the inhalation of smoke or indirectly through the physical respiratory and cardiac strain that pregnant women may experience during smoke events. But, studies have shown that wildfire smoke exposure can cause negative and possibly permanent damage.

Wildfire Smoke and COVID-19

While the outdoors is generally safer for reducing your chances of catching COVID-19, the air outside may not be safe to breathe during a wildfire smoke event. In addition, exposure to **wildfire smoke has the potential to exacerbate COVID-19 symptoms and lead to worse health outcomes. Cloth face coverings do not provide protection from wildfire smoke.** Only respirators such as N95s can filter out PM 2.5, so instead of relying on your face covering for protection, go indoors to a place with cleaner air.

Stay Informed with Air Quality Updates

- ✓ Check today’s air at todaysair.mt.gov
- ☎ Call the Missoula air quality hotline at **406-258-3600**
- 👍 Know the visibility “rules of thumb”
 - Cannot see 5 miles: **Unhealthy**
 - Cannot see 2 miles: **Very unhealthy**
 - Cannot see 1 mile: **Hazardous**



What can I do to stay healthy?

- Limit time and activity level outside
- Keep windows and doors closed (if not too hot!)
- Purchase one or more HEPA Portable Air Cleaners (PACs).
- Make a DIY PAC with a fan + filter!
- If you have A/C, turn on recirculate and clean your filters.
- If you have access, upgrade your HVAC filter to the best one your system can handle.
- If you’re pregnant and have pre-existing conditions, talk with your healthcare provider.
- Stay informed on current air quality and get outside when it’s healthy!

What can I avoid to stay healthy?

- Being super active outdoors. With unhealthy or hazardous air, it’s not the time to run, bike, or play hard outdoors.
- Relying on a cloth mask, bandana or single string dust mask. N95 2-string masks can help, but they are difficult to fit and make breathing harder.
- Burning things like candles, cigarettes, or incense, which add particulate matter to your home
- Vacuuming regularly.
- Keeping this information to yourself - share it with others.
- Despair! The smoke will clear and the skies will be blue and bright again soon...

Learn More and Connect: www.montanawildfiresmoke.org

