



When the smoke rolls into our valley it affects all of us. With a changing climate, wildfire season is longer and fires are occurring at a higher frequency and intensity. While we don't have control over smoke, there are things we can do to stay safe and keep kids healthy.

### How to know when the air is unhealthy?

#### 3 ways to find out:

#### LOOK outside

The basic visibility rules are:

- o Cannot see 5 miles?  
*Unhealthy*
- o Cannot see 2 miles?  
*Very Unhealthy*
- o Cannot see 1 mile?  
*Hazardous*

#### CHECK Today's Air

Go to: [todaysair.mt.gov](http://todaysair.mt.gov)

#### CALL

The Missoula area  
Air Quality Hotline  
**406-258-3600**



[climatesmartmissoula.org](http://climatesmartmissoula.org)  
[info@climatesmartmissoula.org](mailto:info@climatesmartmissoula.org)

# Pregnancy, Babies & Wildfire Smoke

### What's the problem?

Wildfire smoke contains small particulate matter called PM2.5. These microscopic particles can easily get into our lungs or even enter our bloodstream. This is unhealthy for everyone, and especially pregnant women and babies. It's important to understand just how unhealthy the air is on any smoky day.

### Who is at risk and why?

Because children's lungs are still developing, babies and children (especially under 5) are particularly sensitive to smoke. Additionally, several studies have linked PM2.5 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. Any pregnant woman with a preexisting lung or heart condition may be at increased risk.

**Some** studies have shown an increased risk of low birth weight, preterm birth, and even stillbirth for fetuses exposed to **extensive** wildfire smoke through their mothers, as well as other in-utero developmental issues. Lengthy, repeated, and frequent exposure to smoke may present long-term health risks **for both pregnant moms and their babies**, but this has been little studied. Luckily, there are things we can do (see over).



### What should my family do?

- Limit time and activity level outside - consider quieter indoor activities.
- Head indoors and tighten up your residence. Keep windows and doors closed if not too hot.
- Purchase one or more HEPA Portable Air Cleaners. These can be purchased locally or online (\$100-\$250) and are especially good for rooms where pregnant moms and babies sleep. Be sure they filter particles < 1 micron in size (avoid "HEPA-like" filters that don't). Our website has more information + recommendations.
- 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 (see our website).
- Talk to your healthcare provider if you're both pregnant and have preexisting conditions.
- Check the current and forecasted air quality reports so you can get outside and exercise when the air is healthy! Go to [montanawildfiresmoke.org](http://montanawildfiresmoke.org) for air quality resources.

### What should we *not* do?

- Be super active outdoors. With unhealthy or hazardous air, it's not the time for mom or kiddos to run around, bike, or play hard outdoors.
- Rely on a bandana or a single string dust mask. N95 2-string masks can help, but they are difficult to fit, make breathing harder, and are not made for children.
- Add more particulate matter to your home by burning anything (candles, cigarettes, incense), via vacuuming or even some cooking.
- Be in despair! The smoke will clear and the skies will be blue and bright again...and you'll be able to play outside with your baby soon!

