

# FACT SHEET

## Air Quality

### Children and Air Quality

Air quality, both indoors and outside, is very important to children's health. Children breathe more air per pound of body weight than adults. They generally absorb toxins faster. Their internal body parts are more affected than adults because they are still developing. They also are closer to the floor or ground where low lying air pollutants may collect.

Children with asthma are even more affected by poor air quality. Asthma is the most common chronic disease in children. Asthma rates in U.S. children doubled between 1980 and 1995.

### Air Pollutants

Pollutants that harm air quality and children's health include tobacco smoke, carbon monoxide, radon, dust, mold, pet dander, ozone, nitric and sulfur dioxides, particulates, wood smoke, pesticides, herbicides, formaldehyde, heavy metals, and asbestos. These pollutants come from tobacco smoking, heaters or furnaces, wood stoves, animals, soil, vehicle exhaust, forest fires, construction materials, pesticides and herbicides, household cleaners, and home furnishings.

### Poor Outdoor Air Quality--What to Do

- Keep children away from car exhaust and pesticides or herbicides.
- Keep children inside if the air quality outside is poor.
- The Lewis and Clark City-County Health Department monitors outdoor air quality through the months of November to March and in the summer if forest fires are frequent.
- The air quality hotline number for the Helena area is (406) 447-1644. Air quality is often announced daily on the radio.

### Poor Indoor Air Quality--What to Do

To protect children from poor indoor air quality:

- Do not allow smoking in your child's environment.
- Open windows whenever possible to let in the fresh air
- Eliminate mold and moisture that may encourage mold growth.
- Test for gases such as carbon monoxide and radon.
- Avoid use of chemicals and pesticides.
- Do remodeling, construction, and painting during the warmer months when windows can be left open.
- Keep wood stoves and heaters properly vented and in good working condition.