

PARTICULATE MATTER AND YOUR HEALTH

WHAT IS PARTICULATE MATTER?

Particulate Matter is tiny airborne particles that can be inhaled deep into the lungs.

These particles can either be emitted directly by vehicles, industrial facilities or natural sources like forest fires, or formed indirectly as a result of chemical reactions from other pollutants.

WHAT ARE THE HEALTH EFFECTS?

The smaller size of fine particulate matter allows it to penetrate deep into the lungs and can cause:

- Aggravation of asthma, lung or heart disease in people who already suffer from these problems
- Difficulty in breathing in children and the elderly
- Irritation of eyes, throat, skin and nose

WHO IS MOST AFFECTED?

People with heart or lung disease, older adults and children are considered at greater risk from particles, especially when they are physically active. Exercise and physical activity can cause people to breathe faster and more deeply and to take more particles into their lungs

HOW CAN YOU PROTECT YOURSELF?

Air quality is reported in over 30 communities in Alberta. **Using the Air Quality Health Index (AQHI) can help you understand what the quality of the air around you means to your health.**

1. To better understand the AQHI and the recommended actions to take visit:
 - www.alberta.ca/air-quality.aspx
2. To know the AQHI in your community visit:
 - www.environment.alberta.ca/apps/aqhi/aqhi.aspx
 - **Download the AQHI Canada app**
 - You can also find it on the Weather Ne 

Limit exposure to air pollution by adjusting your activity during episodes of increased air pollution (high AQHI) and save those more strenuous physical and outdoor activities on days when the index is lower. Try not to exercise near busy roads; particle levels generally are higher in these areas.

HOW CAN YOU REDUCE PARTICULATE MATTER IN THE AIR?

In our day to day lives, each of us adds to air pollution. Here are some ways to reduce air pollution:

- **Drive efficiently, idle less and maintain your vehicles**
- **Take public transit, car pool, bike or walk**
- **Conserve energy use in your home by turning off lights and using energy efficient appliances**
- **Reduce and recycle**
- **Reduce use of gas powered garden equipment**
- **Limit wood burning such as camp fires and backyard fires during medium to high AQHI days**