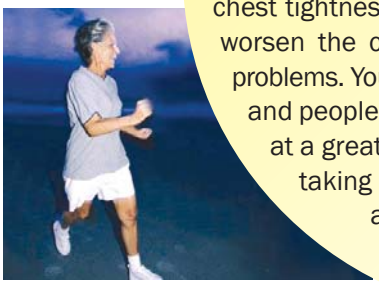
STAY WELL IN THE SMOG DAYS OF SUMMER!

The term "smog" was first used more than 30 years ago to describe the combination of smoke and fog in the air. Today it refers to a mixture of pollutants in the air - mainly ground level ozone and fine air born particles. Most of us think of smog as a brownish-yellow haze effecting large cities. However, smog isn't always visible and can develop in rural and suburban areas too. Overexposure to smog can lead to coughing, wheezing, chest tightness, irritated eyes, nose and throat and can worsen the conditions of those with heart and lung problems. Young children, pregnant women, the elderly and people who work or exercise outdoors are also at a greater risk when smog levels are high. By taking a few simple steps you can be active and safe this summer!



ACTIVE SAFE SUMMER

Step 1

Check the air quality forecast in your community before planning your day. Pay close attention to the Air Quality Index (AQI), especially during "smog season" from April to September. When a poor rating is predicted, a smog alert is issued. There are two types of smog alerts:

1. A Smog Watch is issued when there is a 50% chance of a smog day up to three days in advance.
2. A Smog Advisory is issued when there is a strong chance that a smog day is coming in the next 24 hours.

Air Quality Index (AQI)

0-31 = good air quality
32-49 = moderate air quality
Above 50 = poor air quality

Step 2

Avoid or reduce strenuous activity outdoors when smog levels are high, especially during the afternoon and early evening. If you can, reschedule activities like sport practices, bicycling, running and gardening until the smog alert is over. Or, consider moving the activity to a cool indoor area that, if possible, has air conditioning. If you can't reschedule or move indoors, consider reducing the intensity of activities, making it less demanding on your body. Be sure to drink plenty of water before, during and after activities, and take breaks in a shaded area.

Step 3

Emissions from vehicles add considerably to the harmful effects of smog. Stay away from areas of heavy traffic congestion to reduce your exposure to smog.

Step 4

High smog levels usually occur on hot and humid days. Make sure to apply sunscreen with an SPF of 15 or higher and wear a hat to reduce your risk of heat illness.

Step 5

You can help spare the air on smog days by: driving less or car pooling; avoiding the use of small engine tools such as gas powered lawnmowers and; turning down the air conditioner.

Where can I find information about air quality forecasts in my area?

Daily air quality forecasts are posted for locations throughout the province on the Ontario Ministry of the Environment's website at:

www.airqualityontario.com

You can also join the smog alert network on this website and receive notification by e-mail that poor air quality may be on the way.

Working Wellness at DCCI

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