

LIMIT EXPOSURE TO RESIDENTIAL WOOD SMOKE

BURN WISE AND BREATHE EASY BY
BURNING THE RIGHT WOOD, THE RIGHT
WAY, IN THE RIGHT STOVE, AND LIMITING
EXPOSURE TO INDOOR AND OUTDOOR
POLLUTION FROM RESIDENTIAL WOOD
SMOKE.

FOR MORE TIPS ON BURNING WOOD
WISELY, VISIT BURNWISE.ALASKA.GOV.

YOU BURN IT, YOU BREATHE IT.



*What you can do to limit exposure
to wood smoke pollution.*



THE REAL COST OF WOOD SMOKE

Burning wood may be costing you more than you think. Exposure to wood smoke puts your health at risk because breathing this type of pollution contains the same harmful toxins as cigarettes smoke, including benzene, formaldehyde, acrolein and methane. This leads to respiratory-related problems that require increased medication use, doctor and Emergency Room visits, hospital admissions and school absences.



WHAT IS YOUR LEVEL OF RISK?

The amount of wood smoke you are exposed to and the levels of harmful chemicals in the smoke depends on several factors including whether the wood is burning hot or smoldering, how quickly the smoke rises and spreads, and the amount of time you spend breathing wood smoke. Those who have had high exposure levels for many years are at the greatest risk for having serious respiratory issues like asthma, bronchitis, emphysema, and cardiovascular complications because the tiny particles enter the body's circulation system through the blood stream. However, even those who have had short-term exposure to wood smoke—for days or even hours—can aggravate lung disease, asthma and bronchitis, increasing the chance of developing respiratory infections.

TIPS FOR LIMITING EXPOSURE TO WOOD SMOKE

There are many ways to limit exposure to indoor and outdoor wood smoke pollution. To prevent your health from going up in smoke, learn to burn cleaner and take small steps that result in big changes inside your home and in your community.

- **Burn only dry wood.** It burns hotter, longer and cleaner, and it saves you money.
- **Limit wood burning on bad air days,** or use a mix of energy or pellet logs with your wood to help reduce emissions.
- **Never burn garbage, plastic, pressure-treated wood, tires, paint, asphalt, commercial paper and cardboard, petroleum products or metals.** It is unhealthy and it is illegal.
- **Build small fires to help the wood burn completely.** Adding too much wood at one time cuts down on the air to the fire and leaves unburned wood.
- **Keep your fire hot.** Dampering down your stove cuts off the air, which creates a lot of smoke and produces very little heat.

- **Check your chimney.** A smoldering fire, dirty glass doors or smoke from the chimney are signs that the fire needs more air or drier wood so it produces less smoke and pollution.
- **Limit your exposure.** The amount of wood smoke you breathe depends on how much time you spend outside during smoky conditions and how much smoke is indoors when you are there. If it looks smoky outside, limit outdoor activities. If you are advised to stay inside, keep the indoor air as clean as possible by keeping windows and doors closed.
- **Pay attention to local air quality reports and health warnings** related to smoke. As the concentration of particles in the air changes, so do the steps you should take to protect yourself.
- **Consider seasonal variations.** Smoke does not rise and spread during winter temperature inversions, but instead hangs close to the ground, remaining in the air for long periods of time and entering yards, houses, schools and hospitals with incoming cold air.
- **Better burning practices start with better equipment.** Upgrade to an EPA-approved stove. Today's wood stoves produce almost no smoke and minimal ash, reducing indoor and outdoor air pollution by up to 70 percent. They are also up to 50 percent more efficient than older models.