

# Polycyclic Aromatic Hydrocarbons (PAHs) Fact Sheet

PAHs occur naturally in petroleum products, such as gasoline and diesel, and are formed when these products are burned. PAHs are found in tobacco and wood smoke. They also form when foods are grilled, barbecued, or roasted.

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## PAHs are found in

- Exhaust from cars, trucks, and buses, as well as road dust.
- Cigarette smoke, smoke from cigars and pipes, and chewing tobacco.
- Smoke from grilling, fireplaces, wood stoves, campfires, and forest fires.
- Foods that are grilled, barbecued, smoked, fried, or roasted.
- Liquid smoke seasonings and flavorings.

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## Possible health concerns

Some PAHs:

- May contribute to asthma, bronchitis, and other respiratory problems.
- May affect the developing fetus, including effects on growth.
- May reduce fertility and interfere with the body's natural hormones.
- May increase cancer risk.

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## Possible ways to reduce exposure

- Limit consumption of grilled, barbecued, smoked, fried, and roasted foods. Avoid burning food. Try steaming, boiling, stewing, or poaching your food more often.
- Take steps to reduce exposure to common sources of air pollution:
  - Do not smoke or allow others to smoke in your home or car. Avoid breathing cigarette or other tobacco smoke.
  - Use exhaust fans or open your windows when cooking indoors.
  - Do not idle cars inside garages, especially garages attached to your home.
  - Avoid burning wood, especially for home heating.
- Because PAHs can be in dust, wash your hands often, especially before eating or preparing food, clean your floors regularly, and use a damp cloth to dust.

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### For more information:

Frequently asked health questions about PAHs: <http://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/toxfaqs/tfacts69.pdf>