

# Polycyclic Aromatic Hydrocarbons (PAHs) Fact Sheet

PAHs are formed when materials like gasoline, diesel, tobacco, and wood are burned. They also form when foods are grilled, barbecued, smoked, fried, or roasted.

## PAHs are found in

- Exhaust from cars, trucks, and buses, as well as road dust.
- Exhaust from gas burners, unvented gas fireplaces, and kerosene heaters.
- Tobacco and marijuana smoke, including from cigarettes, cigars, and pipes; and chewing tobacco.
- Wood smoke, such as from fireplaces, wood stoves, campfires, and wildfires.
- Smoke from grilling, or burning cooking oil or food.
- Food that has been grilled, barbecued, smoked, fried, or roasted, and some teas.
- Liquid smoke seasonings and flavorings.

## 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.

## Possible ways to reduce exposure

- Limit how much you eat grilled, barbecued, smoked, fried, or roasted food. Avoid burned food. Try steaming, boiling, stewing, or poaching your food more often.
- Take steps to improve indoor air quality:
  - Do not smoke or allow others to smoke in your home or car, or around your child.
  - Always use an exhaust fan when cooking indoors with an oven, stovetop, gas burner, or hot plate. If you do not have an exhaust fan, open your windows when you cook, and use a portable fan to help move the air outside.
  - If you have a gas oven or gas burners, do not use them to heat your home.
  - If you cook with barbecues and grills, use them outdoors only.
  - Do not idle cars inside garages, especially garages attached to your home.
  - Avoid burning wood, especially for home heating.
- Because PAHs can collect in dust:
  - Wash your and your child's hands often, especially before preparing or eating food.
  - Clean your floors regularly, using a wet mop or HEPA vacuum if possible, and use a damp cloth to dust.

### For more information:

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