

# Fact Sheet

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## The Children's Health Study

The Children's Health Study, which began in 1992, is a large, long-term study of the health effects of children's chronic exposures to Southern California air pollution. About 5,500 children in 12 communities have been enrolled in the study; two-thirds of them were enrolled as fourth-graders. Data on the children's health, their exposures to air pollution, and many factors that affect their responses to air pollution are gathered annually until they graduate from high school.

### Importance of the Children's Health Study

The information provided by the study will help the Air Resources Board (ARB) protect public health. The ARB sets California's ambient air quality standards to protect people who are the most sensitive to air pollution. Children may be more strongly affected by air pollution because their lungs and their bodies are still developing. Children are also more exposed to air pollution than adults since they breathe faster and spend more time outdoors in strenuous activities.

### The Communities and Pollutants Studied

The 12 communities in the study were chosen because they have different patterns of high and low levels of these four pollutants:

- Ozone
- Nitrogen dioxide
- Acid vapor
- Particulate matter that is breathed deep into the lungs

### The Information Gathered by the Study

Concentrations of the four pollutants have been continuously measured in each community throughout the study and for brief periods in schools and some homes. In addition, each child's lung function is tested every spring. Annual questionnaires ask about the children's respiratory symptoms and diseases, such as chronic cough and asthma; level of physical activity; time spent outdoors; and many other factors known to influence children's responses to air pollution, such as parental smoking and mold and pets in the household.

### Major Results of the Study

- Children living in high-ozone communities who actively participate in several sports are more likely to develop asthma than children in these communities not participating in sports.
- Children living in communities with higher concentrations of nitrogen dioxide, particulate matter, and acid vapor have lungs that develop and grow more slowly and are less able to move air through them. This decreased lung development may have permanent adverse effects in adulthood.
- Children who moved away from study communities had increased lung development if the new communities had lower particulate pollution and had decreased lung development if the new communities had higher particulate pollution.
- Days with higher ozone concentrations resulted in significantly higher school absences due to respiratory illness.
- Children with asthma who are exposed to higher concentrations of particles are much more likely to develop bronchitis.

### For More Information

Please contact the ARB's Public Information Office at 916.322.2990 or visit our Web site at <http://www.arb.ca.gov/research/chs/chs.htm>.