HOW OIL AND GAS OPERATIONS IMPACT YOUR BABY’S HEALTH

Air pollutants associated with oil and gas production contribute to serious health impacts in humans, especially in pregnant people, babies, and children. People who live near oil and gas operations are at an increased risk of exposure to a wide variety of air pollutants.

Pregnant people and children are uniquely vulnerable

Pound for pound, children eat, drink, and breathe more than adults, making babies and children uniquely vulnerable to oil and gas pollution. During periods of childhood growth and development, normal biological processes may be disrupted by these environmental chemicals. Children’s lungs, brains, and reproductive systems continue to develop after birth too. Some known health impacts of oil and gas operation pollutants on pregnant people, babies, and children include:

- **Low birth weight.** Living near gas wells is associated with lower birth weight, putting babies at increased risk of early death, infections, and learning disabilities.
- **Congenital heart defects.** Pregnant people with large numbers of gas wells within a 10-mile radius of their home are at increased risk of delivering babies with birth defects of the heart.
- **High-risk designation and preterm birth.** Proximity to gas wells increases likelihood of high-risk pregnancy and preterm delivery.
- **Upper respiratory symptoms.** Residing close to oil and gas operations can increase upper respiratory symptoms.
- **Mental health symptoms.** People living near proposed and operational gas pipelines experience increased stress, anxiety, and depression.
- **Cancer and developmental symptoms.** Exposure to benzene may affect lung development in children and increase the risk of cancer, immune system, neurological, reproductive, and developmental damage.

Pollution from oil and gas operations

Air pollutants include, but are not limited to, volatile organic compounds (VOCs, such as benzene), fine particulate matter (a.k.a. soot pollution, or PM2.5), hydrogen sulfides, and nitrogen oxides (NOX) as well as contaminated groundwater, noise, odor, and traffic fumes. Methane, a potent greenhouse gas that accelerates climate change, is also emitted during oil and gas operations. It can contribute to the formation of ground-level ozone or smog, which can further impact health.

The air pollution created from oil and gas operations emissions is underestimated and under-reported. The pollution solely from processes called venting and flaring—the release or burning of unwanted gases—results in more than 700 premature deaths and 73,000 asthma exacerbations among children annually. Mothers who live in close proximity to wells are more likely to have smaller babies; birth weight can affect development and health issues later in life.

Pollution from oil and gas operations can also travel long distances, impacting populations far from the source.

The mission of Moms Clean Air Force is to protect children from air pollution and climate change. We envision a safe, stable, and equitable future where all children breathe clean air. We fight for Justice in Every Breath, recognizing the importance of equitable solutions in addressing air pollution and climate change. [www.momscleanairforce.org](http://www.momscleanairforce.org)
Environmental justice

The air quality health burdens of oil and gas operations are not equitable.

The impacts of oil and gas processes such as flaring and venting, for example, fall disproportionately on low-income, historically marginalized Hispanic and Indigenous communities.

Systemic racism has created practices that force people of color to live in places with more exposure to air pollution and as a result have higher than average childhood asthma rates.

Pregnant people in urban areas close to high-production wells are more likely to give birth to low-weight babies.

For sources, please visit: www.momscleanairforce.org/sources-oil-and-gas-babys-health

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How can I protect my baby?

If you notice concerns like rashes, vomiting, fatigue, headache, or nosebleeds, you can visit your doctor as well as contact your local health department and state environmental agency.

Families can also join Moms Clean Air Force to demand our elected officials enact the strongest possible oil and gas regulations, reduce air pollution emissions, and foster better health for our children.

Reducing emissions from oil and gas production is critical to children’s health no matter where they live. It’s also essential to addressing climate change as these operations also emit tons of climate-heating greenhouse gases.

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### Air Pollutant | Oil and Gas Source | Health Impacts
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**Benzene** | A VOC that occurs naturally in oil and gas; leaks during routine oil and gas operations, also released by diesel-powered equipment. | Leukemia, asthma attacks, lung infections, low birth weight, headaches, vomiting, dizziness.

**Methane** | The main component of gas and a potent greenhouse gas emitted during oil and gas operations, especially via leaks. | Methane accelerates climate change, extreme heat, and many climate-related health impacts, including heat-related illness, asthma attacks, preterm birth, low birth weight, and vector-borne illness.

**Soot** | Emitted from generators, compressor stations, diesel trucks, and heavy traffic associated with oil and gas development. | Premature death, asthma attacks, low birth weight, cognitive impacts, heart attacks, stroke, lung cancer, premature death.

**Smog (a.k.a. ground-level ozone)** | Created when oil and gas air pollutants, such as benzene and methane, combine with nitrogen oxides and sunlight. | Asthma attacks, lung infections, impaired lung development.