Clear the Air!

Protect your health from bad air
On their day off, folks are coming to the laundromat. It’s so hot! I feel like I’m melting!

Why? Tell us what’s going on, Paulita.

And we have air conditioning in here! When we’re at work, we can’t even breathe!

Do you know why we feel like we can’t breathe when it’s hot out?

Yeah, my son’s asthma has been getting worse lately.

It’s the heat. It affects the air we breathe, which affects our health. It’s one of the many things that affect our breathing.
There are chemicals, dust and very small particles floating around in the air we breathe. These particles can enter through our nose and mouth and get into our lungs.

Particles so small we can’t see them with our eyes.

Viruses and bacteria that cause sickness.

We take oxygen into our lungs from the air around us and then it crosses from the lungs into our bloodstream and travels around our entire body. When we breathe out, the lungs remove unwanted gases.

To have a better idea of what’s going on, let’s first take a look at what happens in our bodies with the air that we breathe in.
Those particles are much smaller than a grain of sand or the tip of a pin.

We struggle breathing in all of these particles...

And then our bodies have to deal with the heat too.
Particulate matter or PM 2.5

Where does it come from?
- Emissions of cars and trucks
- Industry
- Construction
- Wildfires

How can it affect my health?
- Lungs cannot work as well
- Asthma attacks and bronchitis
- Irregular heartbeats
- Heart attacks
- Worsens existing health conditions

Prevention strategies
- Review the local air quality if the levels are high:
  - Wear an N95 or KN95 mask. If you can, stay inside.
- Do not leave the car running when you’re not in it.
- Avoid doing activities where there are lots of cars or other sources of emissions.
- Follow the recommendations related to open burns.
- Consider indoor activities.

If you have to work, wear an N95 or KN95. If you can, stay inside.
The temperature has increased in the last several decades and will continue to rise due to climate change. Exposures at work can also affect us. Old equipment, such as tractors, load trucks, and school buses that are used to carry crops pollute the air we breathe.

When I worked in California, I breathed in the smoke from the wildfires, and it made me feel sick. And when I used to work at the plastic factory, I inhaled a lot of toxic smoke.

The temperature has increased in the last several decades and will continue to rise due to climate change.
Each year there are more natural disasters, wildfires, droughts, etc.

It is important to know what the air quality index is and how to review it, so that when the air quality is announced in the news, we know what it means and how to protect ourselves.

The smoke from wildfires is a mixture of gas and small particles with ash.

### Air quality index

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Index Range</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>301-500</td>
<td>Hazardous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>201-300</td>
<td>Very unhealthy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>151-200</td>
<td>Unhealthy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>101-150</td>
<td>Unhealthy for sensitive groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51-100</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-50</td>
<td>Good</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When the air quality index is very unhealthy or hazardous, we must use an N95 respirator to protect ourselves.

**How to wear the N95 respirator**

1. Pull the lower strap from the top to the lower back of the head, placing the strap under the ears.
2. Pull the upper strap over your head to the upper back of the head, placing the strap on top of the ears.
3. Squeeze gently the metal piece that goes on top of the nose bridge.
4. Check the fit to make sure no air leaks by placing both hands gently over the respirator and inhaling and exhaling. The respirator should collapse slightly when appropriately fitted. If it doesn’t, adjust the straps and nose piece so that the respirator creates a seal with your skin.

It is important to know what the air quality index is and how to review it, so that when the air quality is announced in the news, we know what it means and how to protect ourselves.
Remember the last hurricane? We couldn’t work. The fields and the house flooded. It got really moldy.

Even when there isn’t a hurricane and it rains a lot, it can get really moldy, especially in places that don’t have a lot of air flow.

I remember when we were cleaning up all the debris and it was really dusty. It made it so hard to breathe.

When working in moldy areas, you can use a KN95 or N95 respirator to protect yourself.

If you are using chemicals to remove the mold, more protection is needed. You will need a respirator, goggles, gloves, and protective clothing. It is important to follow the instructions on the label of the chemical you are using.

It was very hard to breathe when we were tearing things down. The dust from the demolition and debris and the mold made it hard and it was so hot.
I could not stand working in the tomato fields. On top of the work being hard, it was so hot and I could not breathe. I had to quit and go work somewhere else.

With so much pollution in the air, what can we do to work safely without getting sick?

If you work outside, in the fields, there are many things you can do...

With these hotter temperatures, we are now seeing more wildfires, droughts, extreme rain storms, and hurricanes. And they are more severe than before.

These conditions have made the air worse, and have made us need N95 respirators more often, even when we don’t like to use them.

We should follow the recommendations from specialists and some common sense to protect our health and safety...

And, if our work requires it, we must use personal protective equipment (PPE). The employer is required to provide certain PPE for us to work.
But if I don't protect myself, I could get very sick. And then I wouldn't be able to work and support my family.

Hurry up! This is my fourth bucket!

The personal protective equipment protects us from breathing in or having contact with pesticides that can harm our health and the health of our family in both the short term and the long term. Pesticides can sometimes cause breathing difficulties or asthma, or they can also cause...

Respiratory Diseases

Silicosis

Pulmonary Emphysema

Anemia

Asthma

Chronic Bronchitis
The type of clothing and PPE depend on a couple of factors such as:

- The type of work
- The weather
- The air quality index

We must always remember that if we become sick, we can't work and it's really hard to support our families.
We must recognize that we are surrounded by all kinds of contaminants like pesticides, smoke from wildfires and other kinds of fires, dust, fumes from cars, trucks and tractors. Add heat to all of this and it’s worse.

It seems like there is no defense against pollution!

Yes, there is, and we can protect ourselves!

Just remember the main steps to protect ourselves:

- Be informed
- Protect your airways
- Wear personal protective equipment (PPE) at work
- Wear the right clothing

Particulate matter or PM 2.5

301-500
201-
151-200
101-
50
0

Air quality

Worried? Call 1-800-352-9464

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