

# PUBLIC HEALTH RISKS OF OIL AND GAS DRILLING

**Living in close proximity to oil and gas drilling is dangerous for human health, especially the health of children.**

## → Air pollution, asthma and other respiratory problems

- ◆ Oil and gas operations release health-damaging pollutants into the air. A [2019 study](#) found that these hazardous air pollutants are released during drilling of a well and throughout oil and gas production.
- ◆ A [2018 study](#) conducted in South Los Angeles found that the rates of physician-diagnosed asthma among children and adults living within 1500 feet of oil and gas drilling were higher than the county-wide average.
- ◆ Children are especially vulnerable to air pollution because their lungs are still developing, they breathe faster than adults, and because they tend to spend more time outside than adults.
- ◆ Especially in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, any increase in air pollution is especially hazardous to health. A [recent study from Harvard](#) found that an increase in air pollution exposure leads to an increased likelihood of death from COVID-19.

## → Cancer in children and adults

- ◆ A [2018 study](#) conducted in Colorado found that for people living within 500 feet of oil and gas drilling, the risk of developing cancer is 8-fold higher than the U.S. EPA thresholds for acceptable risk.
- ◆ A [2012 study](#) also conducted in Colorado found an increased risk of cancer in people living within 2500 feet of oil and gas drilling.

## → Premature birth and birth defects

- ◆ Pollution from oil and gas production has been linked to [birth defects](#), [miscarriage](#), [low birth weight and prematurity](#).

## → Explosions and fires

- ◆ Blowouts from a wellbore at high pressure can propel pipes, mud, cement, and gas. A fire on a well pad can release fumes, smoke, and other toxins into the air. If there is a blowout or fire, nearby houses and schools need to be evacuated and people are at risk of exposure to high heat, smoke, and air toxins. Additionally, first-responders may not know exactly what chemicals are down a specific well or stored on or near the well pad, diminishing their abilities to adequately protect themselves and those living closest to the site.

**We are drilling for oil and gas to combust it, which leads to carbon dioxide emissions. Oil and gas production also releases methane, which is even more potent than carbon dioxide. Together, carbon dioxide and methane are driving climate change. Climate change is a health emergency, especially for our kids.**

- Warming temperatures and increasing extreme weather threaten our health, air, water, food, shelter, and economic security, posing an existential threat to humanity.

- Climate change affects [every aspect of our health](#), including:
- ◆ Heat-related illnesses, such as heat stroke, related to hotter temperatures
  - ◆ Decreased air quality
  - ◆ Increased incidence of infectious diseases
  - ◆ Food, water, and nutrient insecurity
  - ◆ Physical and psychological sequelae of extreme weather events like floods, wildfires, and heat waves, including emergency evacuations
- In order to protect our kids from the worst effects of climate change, we must drastically cut our greenhouse gas emissions, which means leaving oil and gas in the ground and instead using clean sources of energy.

**Here are some good references for more information about the effects of oil and gas drilling and climate change on human health:**

- Moms Clean Air Force, especially [here](#) and [here](#)
- American Academy of Pediatrics Global Climate Change and Children's Health [Policy Statement](#)
- American Public Health Association information about [climate change and health](#)

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