



A CUP OF HEALTH WITH CDC

Avoiding Dirty Air

Air Quality Awareness Week and Asthma Awareness Month --- United States, 2014

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[Announcer] This program is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

[Dr. Gaynes] Welcome to *A Cup of Health with CDC*, a weekly feature of the *MMWR*, the Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report. I'm your host, Dr. Robert Gaynes.

As summertime approaches and warmer weather moves in, air pollution will become an increasing problem across the U.S. People with asthma are especially impacted by deteriorating air quality.

Dr. Suzanne Beavers is a physician with CDC's National Center for Environmental Health. She's joining us today to discuss ways to avoid the negative impacts of air pollution. Welcome to the show, Suzanne.

[Dr. Beavers] Thank you, I'm happy to be here.

[Dr. Gaynes] Suzanne, let's start with what months is air pollution particularly bad in the U.S.?

[Dr. Beavers] It's worse in the summer months, June through September.

[Dr. Gaynes] And is air pollution worse in any particular areas in the U.S.?

[Dr. Beavers] It's generally worse in cities due to increased traffic and industry.

[Dr. Gaynes] What health problems can be caused by air pollution?

[Dr. Beavers] Well, we particularly worry about people with asthma which affects one in twelve Americans. Some of the main effects we see on bad air pollution days are people having an asthma attack or problems with their breathing from other diseases. We also see people come to the emergency room or the hospital with problems such as arrhythmias or irregular heartbeat, heart attacks, stroke, or heart failure.

[Dr. Gaynes] Suzanne, what are some symptoms that a person is being badly affected by air pollution?

[Dr. Beavers] We look at two categories of symptoms. For lung disease, people may have the problems such as wheezing, shortness of breath, or pain in their lungs. They may also cough more than usual. For heart disease, they may have shortness of breath as well, weakness, chest pain, or they may have problems with irregular heartbeat.

[Dr. Gaynes] What should people do to protect themselves against the effects of dirty air?

[Dr. Beavers] Well, as the weather gets warmer, we're all thinking about more ways we can get outside and enjoy the warm air of the outdoors. However, it can be very difficult to determine what day is a bad day in terms of air pollution. That's why we recommend that people go to the Environmental Protection Agency website. Every day they produce a website that gives information on the air quality for more than 400 United States cities. That website is airnow.gov. Also, people can think about

things to readjust their activities when the air pollution is bad. For people who suffer from respiratory or heart disease, they may want to consider exercising the morning when it's not as hot, or limiting their exercise, or exercising indoors.

[Dr. Gaynes] Suzanne, where can listeners get more information about ways to protect themselves against air pollution?

[Dr. Beavers] They can go to cdc.gov/air and find out more information about particle pollution and ozone.

[Dr. Gaynes] Thanks, Suzanne. [PAUSE]

I've been talking today with CDC's Dr. Suzanne Beavers about ways to avoid the health problems associated with air pollution.

If you have asthma or other respiratory or heart conditions, check the air quality index in your area to plan exercise and other outdoor activities.

Until next time, be well. This is Dr. Robert Gaynes for *A Cup of Health with CDC*.

[Announcer] For the most accurate health information, visit www.cdc.gov or call 1-800-CDC-INFO.