

## **Tip Sheet: Air Pollution and the 2008 Summer Olympics**

*While outdoor air pollution is serious in the U.S., the People's Republic of China has an even graver problem. Individuals traveling to the 2008 Olympic Summer Games should plan and prepare for the high levels of outdoor air pollutants in Beijing. The American Lung Association recommends the following tips for people to prepare for and protect themselves from air pollution:*

### **How can air pollution affect my health?**

Air pollution can irritate the respiratory tract and cause serious health problems such as asthma attacks, coughing and wheezing, shortness of breath and chest pain when inhaling deeply. It can also increase the risk of heart attacks, strokes, lung cancer and even early death. Pollution worsens already existing respiratory problems.

### **Am I at risk from air pollution?**

Dirty air can make even healthy people sick. But individuals with serious chronic health conditions should take even greater precautions. People with asthma, COPD (emphysema and chronic bronchitis), heart disease and diabetes are all especially vulnerable to the effects of air pollution—as are smokers. In addition, young children and those over 65 years of age are also at increased risk.

### **What can I do before I leave for Beijing?**

*If you fall into one of these at-risk categories...*

- Make an appointment with your doctor to determine whether or not you should make the trip.
- Once you are given the okay, work with your doctor on a disease management plan. Your doctor might, for example, recommend increasing certain medications while in Beijing.
- If you smoke, quit. Smoking not only adds to pollution but it also may cause an even greater strain on your lungs. Visit the American Lung Association's *Freedom From Smoking Online* program at [www.lungusa.org](http://www.lungusa.org) to help quit.

*All individuals traveling to Beijing should...*

- Consider investing in a particle mask (called an N95 mask), but make sure you leave enough time to get properly fitted before you leave for your trip. You can purchase these for \$25 at an equipment supply store. But recognize that these masks do not protect against all pollutants.
- Plan in advance for any health emergencies that might arise. Make sure you are familiar with the medical services that will be available to you while in China and how your medical insurance deals with incidents that happen while on foreign travel.

### **What can I do to stay healthy while I'm in Beijing?**

- Limit or avoid outdoor exercise. If you choose to exercise, train early in the day or in the evening and if you feel any discomfort, including coughing or wheezing, you should stop immediately.
- If you are outdoors and experience shortness of breath or excessive coughing or wheezing, go indoors immediately and take appropriate action.

For more information about air pollution and lung health, contact the American Lung Association at 1-800-LUNG-USA (1-800-586-4872) or visit [www.lungusa.org](http://www.lungusa.org).