

Playing With Fire

Film Discussion Guide

Film Summary

“Playing with Fire” is one of four short films highlighting the impacts of climate change on human health in Montana. This film explores how increases in wildfires impact air quality and the health and well-being of children.

Pre-Film Discussion

Before watching the film, please consider the following questions:

- a. Thinking back to your own childhood, what are some favorite activities that you did outdoors? How often were you able to play outside?
- b. Why is it important for children to play outside?
- c. What weather or climate-related factors threaten the ability for children to play outdoors?

Post-Film Discussion

- ~ Why are the youngest more vulnerable to the impacts of wildfire smoke and what are some of the ways that it affects their health?
- ~ How does an extended fire season and high levels of smoke impact the lives of children? How might this compare to your own childhood experiences?
- ~ In your opinion, is it more important for children to stay inside during periods of wildfire smoke for their physical health, or to be able to play outside for their mental health?
- ~ What are some of the other ways that climate change impacts the health and well-being of youth (see back)? Is there an impact that is most concerning to you?
- ~ If you are a healthcare provider, how do you communicate climate change risks for youth to parents?
- ~ Do you have access to information on how climate change impacts youth and, if so, how do you respond to this information? If not, how do you want this information to be presented to you?



Please see back for additional information

Climate Change and Youth in Montana

Higher temperatures, increased size and frequency of wildfires, and unexpected weather events, can result in increases in respiratory illnesses, G.I. disorders, vector-borne disease, allergies and asthma, heat-related illnesses, preterm labor, and stress and mental illness, along with impacts on water resources and food security^{1 2}.

- Montana's youngest population is considered one of the most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change.
- *In utero* exposure to air and water pollutants can increase the risk of brain development, stillbirths and preterm labor.
- Children are more sensitive to infectious disease agents found in water contaminated through natural disasters.
- Research shows that young people may face increased risk of anxiety, depression and post-traumatic stress disorder from extreme climate-driven weather events.
- Children are especially vulnerable because they eat, drink and breathe more in proportion to their body size.
- Youth tend to spend more time outside, which can prolong their exposure to pollutants.
- One-tenth of all Montana high school students attempted suicide in 2019, with 1.5 out of every 10 American Indian high school students in 2019³.
- Adverse childhood experiences are already a top issue in Montana. The impacts of climate change could make this worse.

Resources and Recommendations

- **Parents and Caregivers:**
 - Become familiar with your child's medical conditions and have regular checkups with a trusted medical provider.
 - Take time to know your child's school counselors.
 - Talk to your children about climate change (see [healthychildren.org](https://www.healthychildren.org) for tips), and commit to actions that your family can take (see [Chapter 5, p. 135-147 of the C2H2 report](#)).
 - Visit the [Rural Behavioral Health Institute](#) for information about mental health screenings for youth.
- **Schools:** Build in-school capacity to address mental health issues related to climate change.
- **Healthcare Providers:** Talk to parents about the impacts of climate change for their children, especially for those with pre-existing conditions.
- **Air Quality & Health Resources:** Download the [airnow app](#) to track daily changes in air quality, and reference the "[Outdoor activity guidelines based on air quality](#)" chart from Montana.gov.
- **At Home:** Purchase or [create your own DIY air filter](#) to improve indoor air quality
- **General:** See [Chapter 4, p. 87 of the C2H2 report](#) for more about climate impacts on youth in Montana.

¹ [The 2017 Montana Climate Assessment](#)

² [Climate Change and Human Health in Montana: A Special Report of the Montana Climate Assessment](#)

³ [Montana Office of Public Instruction \(2019\)](#).