Traveling? How’s the Air There?

Checking the weather forecast wherever you’re going is a common part of vacation planning. But have you thought to check the air quality? Vacations often involve outdoor activities, and we know that bad air quality can cause health problems for everyone—especially those with chronic lung diseases like chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) or asthma. To protect your health, make an air quality check part of your travel planning.

Summertime often brings a lot of ozone pollution. This pollution is harmful to breathe because it aggressively attacks lung tissue by reacting chemically with it. Ozone exposure can cause immediate breathing problems like wheezing, coughing, asthma attacks and scores of other adverse health effects, even premature death.

When you’re planning your trip, you may want to consider areas that have fewer of these pollutants. Visit airnow.gov or lung.org/our-initiatives/healthy-air/sota to search for air quality across the United States. For local air quality, visit air.utah.gov.

Air quality considers health risks from two types of pollution: ozone and particle. Ozone pollution is invisible and extremely dangerous. Particle pollution can be seen (think truck exhaust) and increases the risk of heart disease, lung cancer, and asthma attacks. Learn more from the American Lung Association at lung.org.
Other things to consider include:

> **Traffic:** One of the factors that increases ozone and particle pollution levels is heavy traffic. That’s why many cities like Los Angeles, Houston, and Washington, D.C., have “ozone alert” days during the summer. Exercising near a busy highway? Try to find a place farther away. Research shows that areas within one-third of a mile of a busy roadway have much greater air pollution levels than we previously thought.

> **Wildfires:** Summer is wildfire season in many parts of the country, particularly the west. Wildfires create extreme peaks in particle pollution that can be very harmful to health. Smoke from those fires can blow hundreds of miles away.

Travel should be fun without compromising your health. Take steps to protect yourself—especially if you have asthma or another lung disease. With a little planning and the right information, air pollution doesn’t need to stand between you and a great vacation.

**IS YOUR ASTHMA UNDER CONTROL?**

Good asthma treatment aims to meet these six goals:

1. Prevent chronic symptoms.
2. Maintain normal breathing.
3. Prevent recurring flare-ups, reducing the need for emergency care.
4. Provide the appropriate medicine without side effects.
5. Maintain normal activity levels, including exercise.
6. Meet your expectations for satisfactory care.

Work with your doctor to meet these goals. Having asthma shouldn’t prevent you from enjoying life and doing normal activities.

*Source: National Asthma Education and Prevention Program.*
Get Care That’s Right for You Whenever, Wherever You Need It

Not feeling well? There are many types of care to choose from—some are even available 24/7.

**PRIMARY CARE PROVIDER (PCP)**
A PCP can help you stay healthy and see you faster when you are sick.

When it’s not an emergency, see your PCP instead—many clinics are open after 5:00 p.m. Can’t find a doctor? Call Member Advocates at **800-515-2220**.

**NURSE LINE**
Not sure where to go—your doctor, urgent care, or the ER? You can call Intermountain Health Answers® 24/7 and talk to a nurse. To reach Health Answers, call **844-501-6600**.

**TELEHEALTH**
Need care right away, but you can’t get to your doctor or urgent care? Intermountain Connect Care® is available anytime, anywhere, using a smartphone or a computer. Download the app or visit intermountainconnectcare.org.

**URGENT CARE**
Is your doctor’s office closed? Intermountain InstaCare® locations are open every day until 9:00 p.m. or later. Download the SelectHealth app to find a location, view wait times, and get in line. Questions? Call Member Services at **800-538-5038**.