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**Air pollution contributes to allergies**

*New study supports efforts to protect children from air pollution*

**SACRAMENTO:** Today, at its monthly regulatory hearing, the California Air Resources Board reviewed the results of a national study that linked exacerbation of childhood allergies to increased air pollution.

A survey of more than 70,000 children, aged three to 17, revealed that exposure to greater amounts of ozone or particulate matter triggers more symptoms of hay fever and respiratory allergies.

"Children are growing and learning constantly and the added burden of allergies can only limit them from reaching their full potential," said ARB board member Barbara Riordan. "This study underlines the need to clean our air. Our future is dependent on protecting children's developing minds and spirits."

The study results, published in the January 2009 issue of Environmental Health Perspectives, found that for even small increases in the ambient amount of ozone or particulate matter, the population of children could expect a significant increase in the likelihood of hay fever and respiratory allergy symptoms. In California, the ARB estimates that one million school absences annually are associated with ozone exposures alone.

Created when the soup of pollutants are heated in the sun, ozone has long been the focus of air pollution regulations. It is the main constituent of smog and a serious threat to those with cardiopulmonary disease. Ozone inflames nasal passages and lung tissue. Recently it has also been associated with diminished lung development in children and the exacerbation of asthma.

The other respiratory antagonist found in the study was particulate matter, an assortment of very small liquid and solid particles floating in the air. When inhaled these particles easily penetrate deeply into lungs increasing the number and severity of asthma attacks, aggravating bronchitis and other lung diseases, and reducing a body's ability to fight infections.

The study's findings support the state's effort to further reduce pollution through local and state level regulations. Over the last two decades ozone concentrations throughout the state have been halved.

"We have grown accustomed to allergies and operate on the assumption that the only relief is medication for symptoms," continued Riordan. "But, reducing ozone and particulate matter also helps. Children can use more energy on their school work and less on struggling with runny nose and itchy eyes."

*The Air Resources Board is a department of the California Environmental Protection Agency. ARB's mission is to promote and protect public health, welfare, and ecological resources through effective reduction of air pollutants while recognizing and considering effects on the economy. The ARB oversees all air pollution control efforts in California to attain and maintain health based air quality standards.*

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