Don’t Let Your Health Go Up In Smoke.

While fireplaces and wood stoves keep you warm, the smoke from burning wood can negatively impact your health.

Why is wood smoke harmful?
The smoke from burning wood contains gases, fine particles and several toxic pollutants such as benzene and formaldehyde.

How does wood smoke effect health?
People who frequently breathe wood smoke are at risk for serious health issues. Short term exposure to smoke may make lung disease worse and cause asthma attacks. Long term exposure also may be linked to cancer, infant mortality and low birth weight in babies. Other health issues can include:
• irregular heartbeat
• premature death in people with heart or lung disease
• decreased lung function
• increased coughing or difficulty breathing

Who is most at risk for health problems?
People at higher risk include infants, pregnant women, the elderly, and people with asthma, lung or heart disease. If you or family members suffer from any respiratory problems or heart disease, you should not burn wood at all. If you must burn it, make sure your stove or fireplace doesn’t leak and that you operate it correctly.

How can you help protect your health?
If you choose to burn wood, there are a few things you can do to help prevent harmful health effects.

Never burn: green, wet or treated wood; plywood; particle board or glued wood; plastics; garbage; and, colored newsprint or magazines because they all release very harmful chemicals.

Burn clean, dry, seasoned and untreated wood only. Burning other materials causes hazardous air pollutants which can damage your stove and health.

Burn wood less if you do not have to depend on it for heat. Stoves and fireplaces that do not have their own combustion air intake will draw air from the house and make other rooms colder.

Consider non-wood options such as natural-gas-fired stoves and fireplaces which are cleaner. (Fireplaces can be retrofitted to use natural gas instead of wood.) Pellet and corn stoves also tend to be cleaner as long as pellets and corn are purchased from a reputable source. (Treated corn and pellets made from refuse can cause toxic emissions.)

Change to a cleaner burning wood appliance. One old, inefficient wood stove can emit the same pollution as 5 dirty old diesel trucks. Most wood stoves sold after Dec. 31, 2015 are required to meet EPA standards, but you should look for a cleaner Phase 2 certified stove that will be required in 2020. (A stove made and only sold in Ohio is not required to meet standards.)

Maintain your wood stove. To prevent fires and carbon monoxide poisonings, have all combustion appliances cleaned and inspected once a year.

Visit www.epa.gov/burnwise or call 614-724-6000 to learn more about the health risks and how you can protect your health.