

# Indoor Air Pollution



## Background Information for Teachers:

### **What is indoor air pollution?**

Using firewood and other low quality fuels indoors for cooking and heating creates a toxic mix of pollutants for children to breathe. Acute respiratory infections cause more than two million deaths in children every year, mainly in developing countries, with indoor smoke from cooking and heating a significant contributor.

Environmental tobacco smoke is also extremely dangerous to children's health. An estimated 700 million children worldwide breathe air polluted by tobacco smoke. Exposure to environmental tobacco smoke is associated with a range of harmful effects in children, such as respiratory tract infections, coughing and wheezing, worsening of asthma, and middle ear disease.

Children are particularly vulnerable to air pollutants. Children breathe more air than adults do in proportion to their body weight. Children also react to certain toxicants more severely than adults because of their narrower air passages and their smaller size. And children's lungs are growing so exposure to air pollutants could hinder normal lung development.

## Content for the Activity:

### **Why can smoke harm you?**

If you breathe in a lot of smoke it can hurt your body. It contains lots of bad chemicals that can damage your lungs. When you stand close to a fire it lets off a lot of this bad smoke.

### **How can you protect your body?**

- Try to stay away from the fire (especially when the fire is started, when wood is added or when the fire is about to die- these are the times when the fire lets off the most smoke.)
- Make sure the wood or patties are dry.
- Avoid breathing in smoke.
- Collect small pieces of wood.
- Lift the fire off of the ground with a grate.
- Have older kids keep the younger kids away from the fires.
- Open windows- two is better than one, or open a door and a window.
- Start the fire outside and then only bring in when colder outside.
- Use the upside down method- put coal on the bottom. Coal then paper then twigs and then maybe one piece of coal.
- Avoid breathing in tobacco smoke. If anyone in your family smokes it is best that they smoke outside. Cigarette smoke is very bad for your body.