



Where Your Health Matters

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 FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Smoke Advisory and Impacts to Mt. Marathon Runners

Seward Community Health Center (SCHC) has received multiple inquiries about the impact the smoke will have on Mt. Marathon runners and kids in particular.

The Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (ADEC) has issued an air quality advisory for Southcentral Alaska due to the wildfire smoke from the Swan Lake fire located on the Kenai Peninsula. The advisory is valid through at least July 5, 2019. ADEC is expecting the air quality for Seward will vary between GOOD and VERY UNHEALTHY (see table below) depending on wind flow.

Air Quality Index	Level of health concern	Visibility	What is recommended
0-50	Good	10+ miles	Nothing
51-100	Moderate	6-9 miles	Unusually sensitive people should consider reducing prolonged or heavy exertion.
101-150	Unhealthy for sensitive groups	3-5 miles	People with heart or lung disease, the elderly and children should reduce prolonged or heavy exertion.
151-200	Unhealthy	1.5-2.5 miles	People with respiratory or heart disease, the elderly and children should avoid prolonged exertion; everyone else should limit prolonged exertion.
201-300	Very unhealthy	0.9-1.4 miles	People with respiratory or heart disease, the elderly and children should avoid any outdoor activity; everyone else should avoid prolonged exertion.
301-500	Hazardous	0.8 miles or less	Everyone should avoid any outdoor exertion; people with respiratory or heart disease, the elderly and children should remain indoors.

Table 1. Data in the table taken from the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation, based on their most recent Air Quality Advisory for Southcentral Alaska for the week of July 4th.

SCHC pediatrician Dr. Carolyn Roloff gives the following public health advice:

Kids age 0-17 are among the people considered sensitive to air pollution, along with anyone who has heart or lung disease as well as the elderly population. Breathing problems in kids tend to start fast and they can be life threatening if they are not addressed quickly enough. Kids also can overlook the early signs their body tries to give them to tell them that something is dangerous for their health. To further complicate things, many of the symptoms of breathing trouble are similar to things that naturally happen when someone is in the middle of a race.

On Mt. Marathon and other local trails, there will not be immediate access to either oxygen or to breathing treatments such as albuterol, and anyone who has breathing trouble will have to come down the mountain or be brought down with assistance before they are able to be treated. **As a pediatrician, I would strongly recommend that any youth who are planning to participate in the Mount Marathon Junior race be extremely cautious as they decide whether or not to run this year, especially if we are in the unhealthy to hazardous range for air quality on race day.**

- If your child has asthma, a heart problem or another chronic breathing problem, I recommend that they don't participate if the smoke doesn't clear up.
- If your child has already been affected by the smoke even without strenuous activity, I recommend that they don't participate if the smoke doesn't clear up.
- If your child had asthma when they were younger but doesn't have symptoms anymore, they should take an albuterol inhaler with them for the race if they decide to run in case their asthma flares up again under the intense conditions.
- If your child does run in the race, talk to them beforehand about the symptoms of breathing problems. They should slow down and possibly turn around without finishing if they start to:
 - Cough
 - Gasp for breath
 - Breathe very fast or very shallow
 - Have chest pain or chest tightness
 - Wheeze or make other funny sounds when they breathe
 - Have trouble thinking straight
 - Feel like they are going to pass out

– End –

If you would like more information or to schedule an interview to learn more about this topic, please contact Craig Ambrosiani (907-224-8505) or Jilian Chapman (907-224-8511).

Seward Community Health Center, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization that operates a federally qualified community health center located at 417 First Avenue inside the hospital facility. SCHC has four permanent providers to serve your primary care needs close to home, and is governed by a volunteer board of directors. For more information, visit www.sewardhealthcenter.org.