

## Idling at School is No Idle Threat When It Comes to Kids' Respiratory Health

We're all familiar with the line of cars that forms at school every day, twice a day, as we're picking up kids or dropping them off. Whether your car is running while you do this may not be on your mind, but there's a lot of evidence to suggest that it should be. Idling engines consume gas and produce air pollution; when we idle at our kids' schools we introduce pollution into the air they breathe that can harm their health.

According to the EPA, air quality monitoring at schools has shown elevated levels of air toxics during the afternoon hour that coincides with pick up. It's not good for anyone to breathe the pollution from car exhaust, but children are particularly vulnerable to it because their lungs are still developing, because they breathe faster than adults and because they breathe 50% more air per pound of body weight. Idling has been directly linked to asthma and other respiratory diseases, to heart disease, and to cancer. When we were kids, we might have known one or two kids who had asthma; however, asthma rates have skyrocketed so our children's classmates waiting on the sidewalk, their peers' younger siblings who are waiting in the back seat, and our children's teachers are much more likely to suffer from asthma than in previous generations.

Here are some general guidelines to remember:

- **If you're stopped for more than 10 seconds, turn it off!**  
Idling for more than 10 seconds uses more fuel than restarting your engine.
- **Idling pollutes**  
Idling one car for five minutes per day can emit as many as 25 pounds of harmful air pollutants and 260 pounds of carbon dioxide per year, a primary greenhouse gas.
- **Even on cold mornings modern engines don't need to warm up**  
Whether from AAA or car manufacturers, experts agree modern engines require only a short idle period after engine start—even in very cold temperatures." Driving slowly for the first mile or two is the best way for the engine and other systems to warm up. Long idling periods can harm your engine and waste gas.

