

# **Crude Oil and Your Health**

Crude oil contains highly toxic chemicals that can evaporate and blow in from the ocean, across neighborhoods and towns. You may smell the odor of these chemicals.

## **Children and the Elderly are Especially Vulnerable**

Exposure to crude oil in the air can cause difficulty breathing, headaches, dizziness, nausea, and confusion. Even brief exposure can cause health problems for people with asthma, COPD, and other respiratory problems. Direct contact with contaminated water can cause skin damage.

Delayed effects of crude oil exposure can include liver, kidney, respiratory, reproductive, blood, immune system and nervous system damage, cancer and birth defects. The occurrence and nature of harm will depend on exposure and individual factors, but some people are more susceptible:

**Children** are at higher risk for many reasons.

**Pregnant women** are also at higher risk, and so are their babies.

**Elderly & those with health problems** may be at higher risk.

## **Protection**

**Preventing exposure is the best way to prevent health problems.**

Be aware of odors and pollution alerts that warn of air pollution. Avoid contact with oily sand, soil, animals, plants or other materials. Vulnerable people in high pollution areas can consult their health care providers about ways to reduce their exposure and remain healthy.

For additional information and resources see:

[www.sciencecorps.org/crudeoilhazards.htm](http://www.sciencecorps.org/crudeoilhazards.htm)

[www.waterkeeper.org](http://www.waterkeeper.org)

**This handout does not provide medical advice. If you are experiencing any health problems, obtain local medical care as soon as possible.**