



## The Hazelwood Health Study has released a large volume of findings, but researchers say they still have a lot to do.

The Hazelwood Health Study researchers have compiled a 6-page flyer highlighting key findings from the early years of the Study which is investigating the long-term health and wellbeing effects of the 2014 Hazelwood coal mine fire. However, the researchers make it clear that they are far from finished, with a lot of data still being analysed and even more still to be collected.

The flyer, which is included with the current edition of the Latrobe Valley Express, summarises findings that have previously been released. These include increased Emergency Department (ED) attendances for breathing complaints and increased use of heart medications during the fire, greater risk of gestational diabetes in smoke-exposed pregnant women, increased risk of heart-related deaths in the smoke-exposed community in the 6 months after the fire, increased symptoms such as runny nose, cough and wheeze after birth in babies who were in the womb during the mine fire, poorer lung and heart health in young smoke-exposed children, adverse educational outcomes in school-aged children and also increased use of mental-health related services and evidence of prolonged psychological distress in adults. The Study has also contributed valuable insights to problems with official communication during the fire which contributed to mixed messaging and a loss of trust in the authorities who were dealing with the crisis.

However, the researchers emphasise that there are many research questions still to be answered and a large volume of recent data is currently being analysed. This includes data collected up to 8 years after the fire on community recovery, lung health in children and adults, ambulance call outs, ED attendances, hospital admissions, cancer diagnoses and deaths in the community.

Even more data will be collected this year, with researchers inviting previous participants from the adult Respiratory Stream and the child Early Life Followup (ELF) Study back into clinics for a 3<sup>rd</sup> round of testing. Previous Respiratory Stream participants have already received their invitations to take part, with testing commencing this week. Anybody who has not yet responded to their invitation is encouraged to book into this 3<sup>rd</sup> assessment which will provide valuable information about the effects of the mine fire smoke on lung health 9 years after the event.

A little later this year, children in the ELF Study will also receive invitations to participate in a 3<sup>rd</sup> round of testing of their lung and heart health. This vital research will provide evidence as to whether poorer lung and heart health, that was previously observed in this group, has persisted or improved 9 years after the fire. The ELF Study families are encouraged to advise the researchers if their contact details have changed, by emailing [latrobe.elf@utas.edu.au](mailto:latrobe.elf@utas.edu.au), and to look out for their invitations.

For more information about the Hazelwood Health Study, and to view a digital copy of the flyer, visit [hazelwoodhealthstudy.org.au](http://hazelwoodhealthstudy.org.au)

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