

Air Quality Information

Definition

- Air quality is a measure of how polluted the air is.
- Information about measuring air pollutants, air quality ratings, and trusted resources.

Health Information

Overview

- Poor air quality hurts people's health.
- Many factors affect air quality.
- **Weather.** Wind, heat, lots of sun, and lack of rain worsen air quality.
- **Pollutants.** Different gases and particles in the air worsen air quality. Examples are carbon monoxide and smog.
- **Wildfires.** Wildfire smoke worsens air quality.

Symptoms

- Poor air quality can cause cough, trouble breathing, sore throat, or chest pain. Cough can become chronic.
- In the long term, poor air quality may increase your risk for cancer and heart and lung disease.
- Sensitive people can have more symptoms. These include children, elderly, pregnant women, and people with lung or heart disease.

Care Advice

1. Key Points

- Weather and pollution affect air quality.
- Poor air quality is more harmful to children, pregnant women, and people with lung or heart disease.
- It's important to understand air quality and what to do about it.
- Here's some information that can help.

2. Air Quality Index (AQI)

- The AQI is a rating system of how clean the air is.
- It's usually reported with the weather.
- It's reported in zones on a scale from 0 to 300.
- Zones are matched to a color to show you how safe the air is.
- **0 to 50 (green zone).** Good air quality. It's healthy for everyone to be outside.
- **51 to 100 (yellow zone).** Moderate air quality. It's okay to be outside, but sensitive people may be affected.
- **101 to 150 (orange zone).** Unhealthy for sensitive people. They should avoid spending a lot of time outside.
- **151 to 200 (red zone).** Unhealthy air quality for everyone. Everyone should limit their outdoor time, especially sensitive people.
- **201 to 300 (maroon zone).** Very unhealthy air quality. Sensitive people should stay inside. Everyone else should limit their outdoor time.

3. How to Protect Yourself and Your Children

- Check the AQI if you plan to spend time outside, especially during the summer.
- On high AQI days, do indoor activities. This is most important sensitive people.
- If possible, play in an indoor park or gym. Daily activity is still important for health.
- On high AQI days, keep your doors and windows closed.

4. How You Can Help Improve Air Quality

- Walk or bike instead of driving a car.
- Carpool or take public transit.
- Use less electricity.

5. Trusted Resources on Air Quality

- **U.S - AirNow.** Online resource provided by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and local public health departments. You can find your current AQI by entering your zip code.
<https://www.airnow.gov>.
- **Canada - Local Air Quality Health Index.** Air quality reporting for Canadian cities.
https://weather.gc.ca/airquality/pages/index_e.html and <https://www.iqair.com/us/canada>.

Call Your Doctor If

- You have questions on how air quality affects your child's health
- You have questions about understanding the AQI rating scale
- You think your child needs to be seen
- You have other questions or concerns

Pediatric Care Advice

Author: Barton Schmitt MD, FAAP and George Sam Wang MD, FAAP, FAACT, FACMT

Copyright: 2000-2024 Schmitt Pediatric Guidelines LLC

Disclaimer: This health information is for educational purposes only. You the reader assume full responsibility for how you choose to use it. The information contained in this handout should not be used as a substitute for the medical care and advice of your pediatrician. Listing of any resources does not imply an endorsement.