

Air Pollution Can Affect Your Health!

Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
Fight Asthma Milwaukee Allies

American Lung Association of Wisconsin
Wisconsin Partners for Clean Air

Wisconsin's air quality is generally good, but occasionally becomes unhealthy. Unhealthy air quality usually occurs when high levels of ozone form on hot summer days or small particles are emitted into the air any time of year.

Air pollution affects thousands of people each year – some severely enough to require hospitalization. Sometimes it is difficult to see or smell ozone and particle pollution, but your lungs are still affected by them. Health problems associated with air quality can occur immediately, after a few hours of exposure, or after a few days of exposure.

What are the symptoms?

Exposure to air pollutants can cause throat irritation, shortness of breath, coughing and wheezing or chest pain; increase the severity and occurrence of asthma attacks; and aggravate emphysema, chronic bronchitis and other lung ailments.

Health effects may also occur without noticeable symptoms. Ozone continues to damage lungs even when symptoms have disappeared. The best way to protect your health is to find out when the air quality is poor in your area and **take simple precautions even when you don't feel obvious symptoms.**

Who Is At Risk From Exposure To Air Pollution?

Some people are more sensitive to air pollution than others. It is important that **everyone** determine his or her own threshold to air pollution before spending time outdoors on poor air quality days.

Those most at risk from air pollution are:

People with Asthma

Active adults

People with Heart Disease

Older adults

People with Respiratory Diseases

People with Diabetes

Children

Pregnant Women

Pay Attention to the Air Quality Index!

The Air Quality Index, or the AQI, is a scale used to report actual levels of ozone, particle pollution, and other air pollutants. The higher the AQI value, the greater the health concern. (See chart on reverse.)



Colors have been assigned to each AQI category – **green** means good, **orange** means the air quality is “unhealthy for sensitive groups.”

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) will issue an **Air Quality Watch** when pollutant levels are **forecast** to be in the orange range the next day. DNR issues an **Air Quality Advisory** when air pollutants have reached or exceeded the orange range.

Find out current air quality conditions by visiting DNR at: <http://maps.dnr.state.wi.us/imf/dnrimf.jsp?site=wisards> or by calling the toll-free Daily Air Hotline at 1-866-DAILY AIR (1-866-324-5924).

Air Quality Index Levels of Health Concern	Numerical Value	Meaning
Good	0-50	Air quality is considered satisfactory, and air pollution poses little or no risk.
Moderate	51-100	Air quality is acceptable; however, for some pollutants there may be a moderate health concern for a very small number of people who are unusually sensitive to air pollution.
Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups	101-150	Members of sensitive groups may experience health effects. The general public is not likely to be affected.
Unhealthy	151-200	Everyone may begin to experience health effects; members of sensitive groups may experience more serious health effects.
Very Unhealthy	201-300	Health alert: everyone may experience more serious health effects.

You can sign up to receive automatic e-mail notifications when the air quality reaches or is expected to reach the orange range at: <http://dnr.wi.gov/org/aw/air/health/listserv.html>

What Can I Do To Protect My Health?

To reduce your risk, reduce your exposure to air pollution. On days when an Air Quality Watch or Advisory has been issued and the Air Quality Index is orange or higher you should:

- Avoid strenuous outdoor activity
- If you do exercise, take it easy – walk instead of run, exercise for a shorter duration than usual, and avoid high vehicle traffic areas.
- Stay indoors, preferably in an air-conditioned room
- Listen to your body!
 - Pay attention to symptoms such as coughing, shortness of breath and chest pain.
 - If you experience symptoms, take your prescribed medication and **contact your health care provider.**

Who Can I Contact For More Information?

- American Lung Association - For non-emergency advice about lung health and air pollution call the ALA Helpline (24-hours a day) at 1-800-586-4872
- US Environmental Protection Agency – Visit the EPA’s air quality website at: www.airnow.gov.

_____ MD / RN / PA Phone: _____

Comments: _____



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