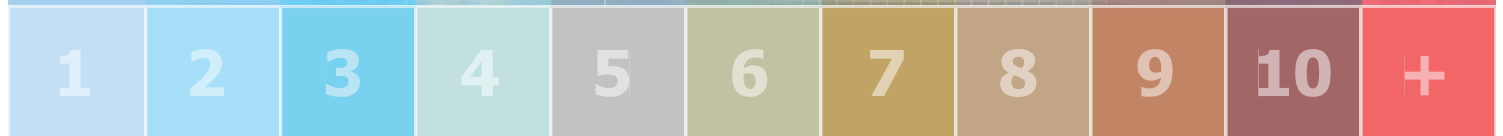




The New AIR QUALITY HEALTH INDEX: How Air Pollution Affects Your Health Fact Sheet



Are you at risk?

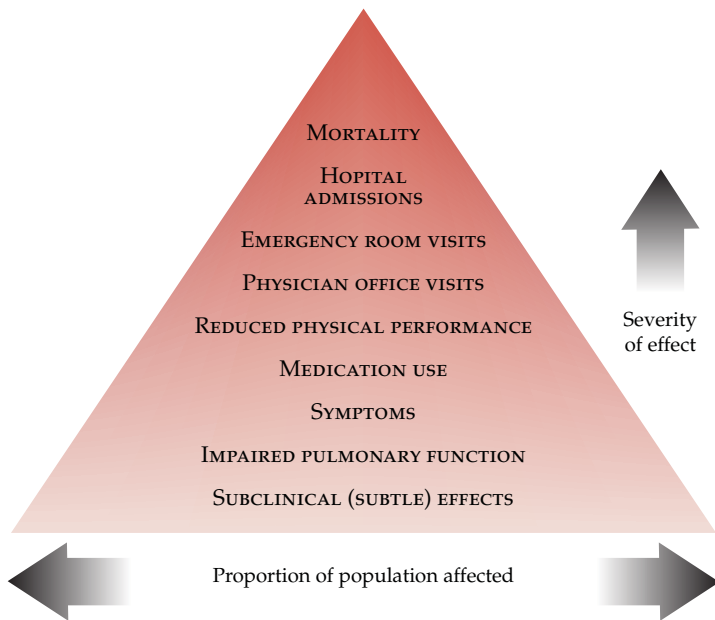
Every individual reacts differently to air pollution. Children, the elderly and those with heart or lung disease are most sensitive to the adverse health effects of air pollution. People with diabetes are also at greater risk because they are more prone to heart disease. Even Canadians who are relatively fit and healthy can experience symptoms when exercising or working outdoors if pollution levels are higher than usual.

Air pollution has a measurable impact on the health of Canadians. Analysis of data from eight Canadian cities shows that 5,900 deaths can be linked to air pollution every year. Air pollution sends thousands more Canadians to hospital each year.

The health effects of air pollution

Depending on the length of time you are exposed, your health status, your genetic background, and the concentration of pollutants, air pollution can:

- Make it harder to breathe
- Irritate your eyes, nose and throat
- Worsen chronic diseases such as heart disease, chronic bronchitis, emphysema and asthma
- Lead to premature death



Negative health effects increase as air pollution worsens. Studies show that even modest increases in air pollution can cause small but measurable increases in emergency room visits, hospital admissions and death.

The health effects of air pollution can be illustrated using a pyramid, with the more serious and rare effects (such as death) at the peak and the milder but more common effects (such as difficulty breathing) at the base. The pyramid shows that quality of life can be compromised by air pollution long before

individuals show up in hospital waiting rooms. As the severity of health effects increases, the number of people affected decreases.

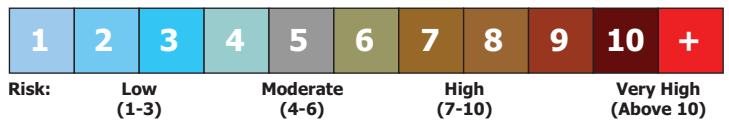
What you can do to protect your health

We can protect our health from the negative health effects of air pollution by appropriately changing our behaviour to reduce our exposure to air pollutants when air quality deteriorates. Checking the *Air Quality Health Index* on a regular basis is the first step.

The index assesses the impact of air pollution on your health, listing a number from 1 to 10+ to indicate the level of immediate health risk associated with local air quality.

Air Quality Health Index

Toronto



Current

Observed at
9:00 AM EDT
Wednesday 2 May 2007

2
Low Health Risk

At-risk population: • Enjoy your usual outdoor activities.
• Find out if you are at-risk.

General population: • Ideal air quality for outdoor activities.

Forecast Maximums

Issued 6:00 AM EDT Wednesday 2 May 2007

Wednesday
6
Moderate Health Risk
Health Message

Wednesday Night
1
Low Health Risk
Health Message

Thursday
2
Low Health Risk
Health Message

Who is at risk?

People with heart and lung conditions are most affected by air pollution.

To find out if you are at risk, consult [the health guide](#), your physician or [your local health authority](#).

Visit the [national AQHI Web site](#) to learn more about the AQHI

Did you know...?

Riding your bike, walking or rollerblading to work is healthy for you and keeps the air clean.

The New AIR QUALITY HEALTH INDEX

The higher the number, the greater the risk and the greater your need to take precautions.

The index describes the level of health risk associated with these numbers as 'low', 'moderate', 'high' or 'very high', accompanied by health advice for the general population and for those at increased risk

In addition to current air quality health information, a forecast is provided for the next day.

Using the index to protect your health

The index is being introduced in communities across Canada in a phased approach. Look for it with weather forecasts for your community or go to www.ec.gc.ca/cas-aqhi to link to Environment Canada's weather

office website. You can use the forecasts to plan your activities, whether over the next hour or the next day.

As seniors, parents of children with asthma, and people suffering from diabetes, heart or lung disease, you can use the index to assess the immediate risk air pollution poses to your health and take steps to lessen that risk.

Even if you're relatively healthy, fit and active, you can consult the index to decide when and how much to exercise or work outdoors.

The index does not, however, measure the effects of everything in the air on your health. Pollen, dust, heat or humidity and odors can affect your health and your sense of well being. Always pay attention to what your body is telling you, and follow your doctor's advice.

Health Risk	Air Quality Health Index	Health Messages	
		At Risk Population*	General Population
Low Risk	1 - 3	Enjoy your usual outdoor activities.	Ideal air quality for outdoor activities.
Moderate Risk	4 - 6	Consider reducing or rescheduling strenuous activities outdoors if you are experiencing symptoms.	No need to modify your usual outdoor activities unless you experience symptoms such as coughing and throat irritation.
High Risk	7 - 10	Reduce or reschedule strenuous activities outdoors. Children and the elderly should also take it easy.	Consider reducing or rescheduling strenuous activities outdoors if you experience symptoms such as coughing and throat irritation.
Very High Risk	Above 10	Avoid strenuous activities outdoors. Children and the elderly should also avoid outdoor physical exertion.	Reduce or reschedule strenuous activities outdoors, especially if you experience symptoms such as coughing and throat irritation.

*Unsure if you are at risk? Consult this [health guide](#) to help you determine if you are at risk from air pollution. People with heart or breathing problems are at greater risk. Follow your doctor's usual advice about exercising and managing your condition.