

## Can Air Pollution Make You Sick?

Yes! Breathing air that is polluted can lead to serious health problems, including asthma attacks and heart trouble. The effects of air pollution are greatest when outdoor air pollution is at its worst, but some people have trouble even when air pollution is not bad enough to cause a problem for others.

Children are at greater risk from breathing polluted air because their lungs are still developing, they breathe in more air in relation to body weight than adults and they are active outdoors a great deal. Seniors and those with heart or lung diseases also are more likely to have trouble on “bad air” days. If you have a child or a family member with asthma, it is very important that you know when the outdoor air is unhealthy.



## When and Where Is Air Pollution a Problem in Georgia?

The two kinds of outdoor air pollution to worry about in Georgia are ground-level ozone and fine particles. The two together are sometimes called smog. The entire metro Atlanta area fails federal air quality standards for both ozone and fine particles.

Although fine particle air pollution can be a concern at any time of year, ozone usually is a problem only during the warm months of late spring and summer, known as “smog season.”



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## Outdoor Air Quality & Physical Activity



## Guidance for Metro Atlanta Families



## How Do You Know When the Air Is Unhealthy?

A measure called the Air Quality Index (AQI) rates daily air quality on a scale from 0 (the cleanest) to 500 (the most polluted). Health warnings are set according to research studies that link health risks with different amounts of air pollution.

The Georgia Environmental Protection Division (EPD) issues a smog alert whenever the AQI is predicted to be more than 100. Atlanta area residents can sign up to receive emailed alerts at [www.CleanAirCampaign.org](http://www.CleanAirCampaign.org). Another way to check for an alert is to call EPD's Air Quality Hotline (404.362.4909). These systems are only in place during smog season. However, the AQI forecast may be checked year-round at this EPD Web site: [www.georgiaair.org/smogforecast](http://www.georgiaair.org/smogforecast).

Ask your child's caregivers if they are checking air quality daily between May and September.



## Recommended Changes in Outdoor Activities

AQI	Health Concern	Recommendation
GREEN 0-50	The air is considered healthy for everyone.	Outdoor activities are recommended for all children and adults.
YELLOW 51-100	The air is unhealthy mainly for very sensitive children and adults.	Outdoor activities are recommended for most children and adults except those known to respond to air pollution at this level.*
ORANGE 101-150	The air is unhealthy for sensitive individuals, <u>including all children</u> under the age of 18, <u>the elderly</u> , and those with <u>heart or lung conditions</u> .	Outdoor exertion for all children, the elderly and for sensitive adults should be <u>limited</u> . When possible, all outdoor activity should be moved to times of day when the pollutant of concern is lowest. Avoid breathing hard outdoors for more than a short period of time.
RED 151-200	The air is unhealthy for everyone.	Outdoor activities should be <u>avoided completely</u> for children and adults. Depending on the pollutant that is high, there may be some times during the day that are safer for outdoor activity (see below). Avoid breathing hard outdoors.
PURPLE 201-400	The air is unhealthy or even hazardous for everyone.	Outdoor activities should be avoided completely for all children and adults throughout the day and evening.

\*Parents and other caregivers should watch children and the elderly carefully for signs of distress to find out if they are particularly sensitive to air pollution. Be sure always to carry medications for people in your care who have asthma.

### Ozone and particle pollution go up and down with different patterns.

- Ozone pollution is usually at its worst from 2 - 7 p.m. Move outdoor activities to the morning, and limit outdoor time after 2 p.m. as much as possible.
- Particle pollution may peak during morning and evening rush hour but sometimes stays high all day. Outdoor time should be limited throughout the day and evening.
- If both ozone and particle pollution are high, outdoor activity should be limited all day and in the evening.
- If a conditioned, indoor space is not available, reduce the intensity of outdoor activities. The faster the breathing rate, the more pollution is taken into the body.