

Ozone Media Kit

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency



THE AIR QUALITY INDEX (AQI)

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Ozone can cause serious respiratory problems for people of all ages — even healthy people. But people can't take steps to protect themselves unless they know when they're at risk.

That's why EPA created the Air Quality Index, a color-coded scale that provides information on local air quality and levels of health concern. The AQI also includes messages to help you know when to consider changing your activities.

State and local air agencies are required to report the Air Quality Index any time several pollutants — including ozone — reach unsafe levels. Many agencies report the AQI for ozone throughout the summertime ozone season. You can find the index on your local air agency Web site, or in many newspapers or TV weather forecasts.

Using the AQI is easy. When the AQI is forecast to hit above 100 (that's code orange, red or purple), pay attention! That's when you may need to adjust your daily activities so you or your children can breathe easier. You may need to:

- Exercise in the morning or later in the evening, when pollution levels are usually lower;
- Spend less time participating in vigorous outdoor activities;
- Take it a little easier when you're outside. Don't overexert yourself;
- Limit children's prolonged, strenuous outdoor activity;
- Ask coaches to rotate players out more frequently; and
- Pay attention to respiratory symptoms, such as coughing, wheezing and discomfort when you take a deep breath.

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