

Air Pollution & Health



Air pollution has devastating effects on health, particularly the heart, lungs, and brain.

SHORT-TERM HEALTH EFFECTS



The most obvious symptoms of air pollution exposure come from the respiratory system. Asthma, COPD, lung cancer, and numerous other lung diseases are known to be directly linked to breathing dirty air.

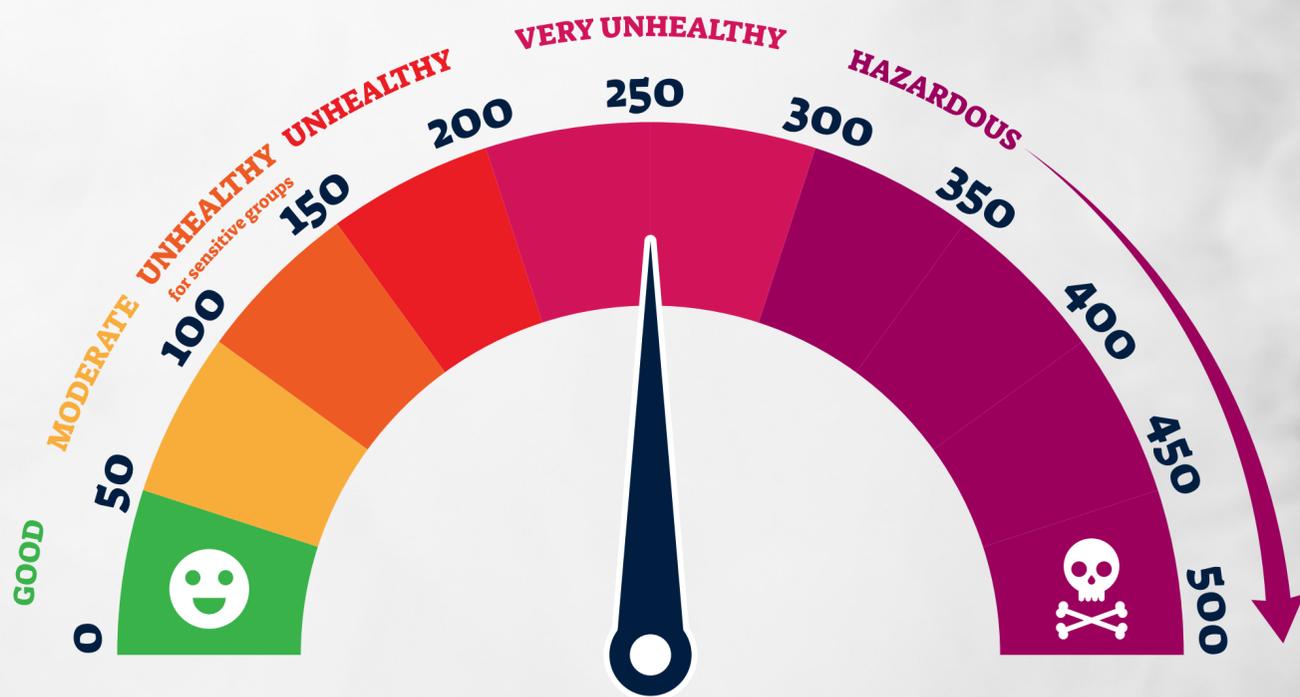
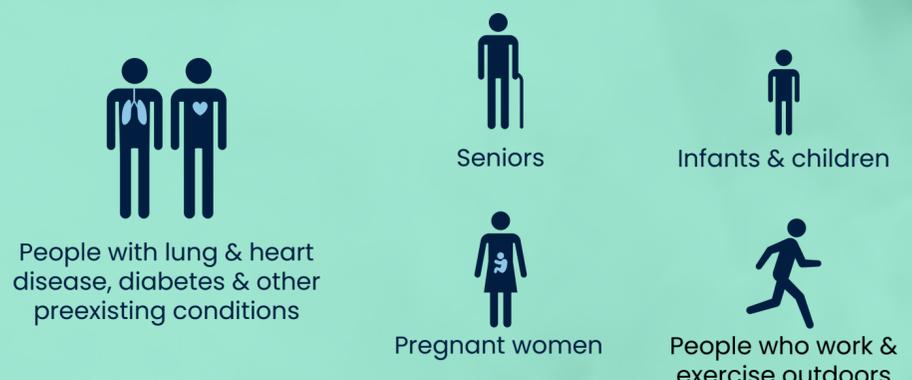
Exposure to air pollution is linked to stroke, heart disease and other cardiovascular health issues. As little as 15 minutes of exposure to particle pollution can result in an increase in blood pressure.

Air pollution is linked to neurological diseases like dementia, Parkinson's Disease, and multiple sclerosis. It also stunts the cognitive development of children and can permanently damage the brain.

Air pollution is the single greatest environmental risk factor for premature death and disease in the world. Everyone is susceptible to the harmful effects of air pollution. However, some populations are more vulnerable than others. Those include people with chronic health conditions (e.g., COPD, asthma, heart disease, and diabetes); infants, children, and teenagers; older adults; pregnant women; and people who work or exercise outdoors.

Knowing the air quality index (AQI) – which is explained below – is very important for those vulnerable groups. Their health can be affected in the short-term whenever the AQI is above yellow. Everyone's health can be affected when air quality is red or higher.

WHO IS MOST AT RISK?



AIR QUALITY INDEX

The National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS, pronounced "naks") cover ambient air concentrations of the following pollutants: carbon monoxide (CO), nitrogen dioxide (NO₂), sulfur dioxide (SO₂), particulate matter (PM), ground-level ozone (O₃), and lead. The NAAQS set a standard for each criteria pollutant. The Clean Air Act requires NAAQS to be reviewed every five years to ensure they're based on the latest scientific information. The AQI's color categories range from green (good) to maroon (hazardous). Those categories are described below:

Good (Green): Air quality is satisfactory, and air pollution poses little or no risk.

Moderate (Yellow): Air quality is acceptable. However, there may be a risk for some people, particularly those who are unusually sensitive to air pollution.

Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups (Orange): Members of sensitive groups may experience health effects. The general public is less likely to be affected.

Unhealthy (Red): Some members of the general public may experience health effects; members of sensitive groups may experience more serious health effects.

Very Unhealthy (Purple): Health alert; the risk of health effects is increased for everyone.

Hazardous (Maroon): Health warning of emergency conditions; everyone is more likely to be affected.

Visit gaspgroup.org/air-quality for more information.