Air Quality Guide for Ozone

Ground-level ozone is one of our nation's most common air pollutants. Use the chart below to help reduce your exposure and protect your health. Visit AirNow.gov for your local air quality forecast (www.airnow.gov).

Air Quality Index	Who Needs to be Concerned?	What Should I Do?
Good (0-50)	It's a great day to be active outside.	
Moderate (51-100)	Some people who may be unusually sensitive to ozone.	**Unusually sensitive people:** Consider making outdoor activities shorter and less intense. Watch for symptoms such as coughing or shortness of breath. These are signs to take it easier. **Everyone else:** It's a good day to be active outside.
Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups (101-150)	Sensitive groups include **people with lung disease such as asthma, older adults, children and teenagers, and people who are active outdoors.**	**Sensitive groups:** Make outdoor activities shorter and less intense. Take more breaks. Watch for symptoms such as coughing or shortness of breath. Plan outdoor activities in the morning when ozone is lower. **People with asthma:** Follow your asthma action plan and keep quick-relief medicine handy. **Everyone else:** Consider making outdoor activities shorter and less intense.
Unhealthy (151-200)	**Everyone**	**Sensitive groups:** Do not do long or intense outdoor activities. Schedule outdoor activities in the morning when ozone is lower. Consider moving activities indoors. **People with asthma:** Follow your asthma action plan and keep quick-relief medicine handy. **Everyone else:** Reduce long or intense outdoor activity. Take more breaks, do less intense activities. Schedule outdoor activities in the morning when ozone is lower.
Very Unhealthy (201-300)	**Everyone**	**Sensitive groups:** Avoid all physical activity outdoors. Move activities indoors* or reschedule to when air quality will be better. People with asthma: Follow your asthma action plan and keep quick-relief medicine handy. **Everyone else:** Avoid long or intense outdoor exertion. Schedule outdoor activities in the morning when ozone is lower. Consider moving activities indoors.*
Hazardous (301-500)	**Everyone**	**Everyone:** Avoid all physical activity outdoors.* **People with asthma:** Follow your asthma action plan and keep quick-relief medicine handy.

***Note:** If you don't have an air conditioner, staying inside with the windows closed may be dangerous in extremely hot weather. If you are hot, go someplace with air conditioning or check with your local government to find out if cooling centers are available in your community.

Key Facts to Know About Ozone:

- Ozone in the air we breathe can cause serious health problems, including breathing difficulty, asthma attacks, lung damage, and even death from lung disease.
- Ozone forms in sunlight, usually on hot summer days. Ozone is worse in the afternoon and early evening, so plan outdoor activities for the morning.
- You can reduce your exposure to ozone and still get exercise! Use AirNow's (www.airnow.gov) current Air Quality Index (AQI) information and forecasts to plan your outdoor activities.

What is ozone?

Ozone is a colorless gas that can be good or bad, depending on where it is. Ozone up high in the stratosphere forms the ozone layer, which shields the earth from the sun's ultraviolet rays. But ozone at ground level, where we breathe, can harm human health. Ground-level ozone forms when two types of pollutants, volatile organic compounds and nitrogen oxides, react in sunlight. These pollutants come from sources such as vehicles, industries, power plants, and products such as solvents and paints.

Why is ozone a problem?

Ozone can cause health problems, including coughing, breathing difficulty, and lung damage.
Exposure to ozone can make the lungs more susceptible to infection, aggravate lung diseases, increase the frequency of asthma attacks, and increase the risk of death from lung disease.

Do I need to be concerned?

Even healthy adults can experience ozone's harmful effects, but some people may be at greater risk. They include:

- People with lung disease such as asthma.
- Children, including teenagers, because their lungs are still developing, and they breathe more air per pound of body weight than adults.
- Older adults.
- People who are active outdoors, including outdoor workers.

How can I protect myself?

Use the Air Quality Index (AQI) to plan outdoor activities when ozone levels are lower. Check AirNow.gov, download the free AirNow app, or install the free AirNow widget on your website.

Find the app (https://www.airnow.gov/airnow-mobile-app/)

Find the widget (https://www.airnow.gov/aqi-widgets/)

Stay healthy: exercise, eat a balanced diet, and keep asthma under control with your asthma action plan.

When you see that the AQI is unhealthy, take simple steps to reduce your exposure:

- Choose a less intense activity.
- Shorten or take more breaks during outdoor activity.
- Reschedule activities to the morning or to another day.
- Move your activity inside where ozone levels are usually lower.

Can I help reduce ozone?

Yes! Here are a few tips.

- Drive less: bike or walk, carpool, or use public transportation.
- Turn off lights and devices that you are not using.
- Keep your vehicle engine tuned, and don't let your engine idle.
- Inflate tires to the recommended pressure.
- When refueling, stop when the pump shuts off. Avoid spilling fuel and tighten your gas cap.
- Use low-VOC paint and cleaning products; seal and store them so they can't evaporate.
- Watch for Ozone Action Days in your area.

EPA United States Environmental Protection Agency

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