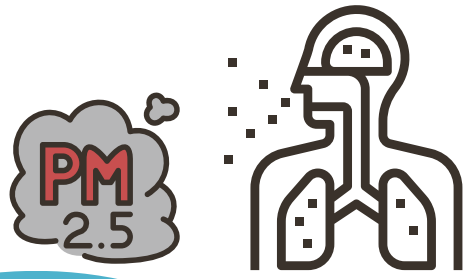
AIR QUALITY AWARENESS

What is Air Quality? Air quality is a measure of the amount of pollutants in the air at a specific time and location.

Why does it matter? Understanding the quality of the air we breathe helps us make informed decisions that protect our health, reduce environmental impact, and advocate for cleaner, safer communities.

Air Pollution:



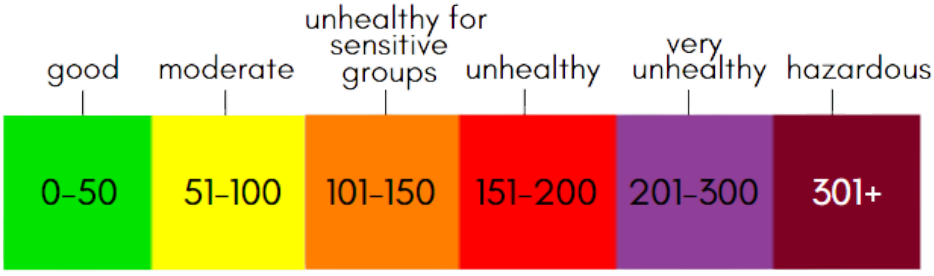
The air can be filled with tiny particles or liquid droplets that are harmful to breathe, such as **dust, dirt, soot, pollen, mold, smoke, or organic compounds and metals**. We call these “particulate matter”, or PM2.5 or PM10, depending on their size.

Ground-level ozone is another form of air pollution created by chemical reactions involving industrial pollutants and sunlight.

Since 2020, there have been 45 days where ozone levels were unhealthy for sensitive groups or worse.

Exposure to PM2.5 pollution is linked to many issues, such as:

- Premature death in people with heart or lung disease
- Nonfatal heart attacks
- Irregular heartbeat
- Aggravated asthma
- Decreased lung function
- Increased respiratory symptoms, such as coughing or difficulty breathing



The **Air Quality Index (AQI)** is a tool for communicating outdoor air quality and health. It has six color-coded categories according to a range of index values. The higher the AQI value, the greater the air pollution and health concern

MORE ON AIR QUALITY

Air quality has many effects on environmental and human health



Wildland Fires & Smoke

Smoke from wildfires worsens air quality, increasing health risks for children and the elderly. These health risks include asthma and lung or heart disease. If your community is affected by wildfires, consider staying inside and take proper precautions against smoke entering your home. This includes keeping windows shut and using air conditioners, fans, and portable air cleaners, if possible. Stay tuned to local news and be prepared to evacuate with a go-bag if needed.



Health & Asthma

Studies indicate that indoor environmental exposure to allergens (such as mold, dust mites, pests) plays a role in triggering asthma symptoms. It is important to ensure safe indoor air quality because the average American spends 90% of their time indoors, where some pollutant concentrations are 2-5 times higher than outdoors. To limit indoor exposure to these pollutants, use an air purifier, increase ventilation, and change filters on heaters or air conditioners regularly. Checking the Air Quality Index and limiting time outside when air quality is poor will also protect from asthma symptoms.

https://allergyasthmanetwork.org/what-is-asthma/asthma-statistics/

Harm to Ecosystems

Air pollution is harmful to ecosystems because wind can carry air particles over long distances before depositing them onto the ground. The spreading of these particles could:



★ Make lakes and streams acidic due to air pollutants such as sulfur dioxide (from burning coal and fossil fuels in power plants or industrial processes), nitrogen dioxide (due to vehicle exhaust emissions, especially from gasoline vehicles), and ammonia (from agricultural production and fertilizers)



★ Reduce soil quality by degrading vital soil nutrients

★ Damage sensitive forests and limit crop fields

★ Affect the biodiversity of ecosystems by reducing microbial & plant communities

★ Contribute to acid rain

Source: US EPA

Follow this link for more information on wildfires and indoor air quality safety advice: https://www.epa.gov/emergencies-iaq/wildfires-and-indoor-air-quality-iaq