



The following recommendations will help schools and childcare staff determine when and how to adjust outdoor activities when air quality starts to reach unhealthy levels. Adjust activities accordingly to help children stay active while protecting their health. Guidance for intensity of activities is provided by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. For additional recommendation review the [CDC Physical Activity guidelines for Americans 2<sup>nd</sup> edition](#). For Ohio specific guidance, review the [Ohio Environment Protection Agency Air Monitoring website](#).

### Outdoor Activity Duration

Air Quality Index	15 minutes to 1 hour	1 to 4 hours	4 - plus hours
Good (0-50)	Great day to be outdoors!	Great day to be outdoors!	Great day to be outdoors!
Moderate (51-100)	Most children can participate without any limitations. For those with health conditions, think about different activities or ways they can join in safely.	Monitor students with health conditions for any changes in their health. Restrict activities to light intensity.	Consider relocating students to an indoor area or a place with better air quality. Restrict activities to lower intensity and/or shorten the duration of the activities.
Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups* (101 – 150)	Restrict activities to low intensity. Provide breaks every 20 minutes. Ensure indoor spaces and activities are available for children with sensitivities.	Restrict activities to low intensity and provide breaks every 20 minutes. Cancel, reschedule, or move indoors any activities that involve moderate to heavy exercise intensity.	Restrict activities to light intensity and keep them under four hours in duration. Provide breaks every 20 minutes. Cancel, reschedule, or move indoors any activities involving moderate to heavy exercise intensity.
Unhealthy (151 – 200)	Postpone or relocate all outdoor activities. Ensure students remain indoors with only light activities.	Postpone or relocate all outdoor activities. Ensure students remain indoors with only light activities.	Postpone or relocate all outdoor activities. Ensure students remain indoors with only light activities.
Very Unhealthy (201-300)			
Hazardous (301- 500)			

Adapted from the Minnesota Outdoor Air Quality Guidance for Schools and Child Care.

\*Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups: Individuals with health conditions, or their caregivers, should actively manage their medical conditions. Monitor for symptoms and any signs of worsening, keeping medications accessible. Consult a healthcare provider as necessary.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### What is the Air Quality Index (AQI)?

The Air Quality Index is a guide for reporting daily air quality. It uses colors and numbers to show how clean or polluted the air is with ground-level ozone and particle pollution. The higher the AQI value, the greater the level of air pollution and the greater the health concern. When the forecast is for AQI values to reach or exceed 101, an air quality alert is issued to help protect people's health from the effects of exposure to air pollution.

### How do I know when air quality is unhealthy?

Before canceling or rescheduling an outdoor athletic event or activity, check the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency air quality web page [Air Quality Monitoring](#) for real-time information and daily forecasts.

Be prepared and air aware. Stay informed about current air quality by signing up for Air quality notifications at <https://m.enviroflash.info/>.

Download the EPA'S AirNow Mobile App for Apple or Android to quickly check current and forecast air quality.

<http://apps.apple.com/us/app/epa-airnow/id467653238>.



<http://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.saic.airnow&pli=1>.



### How long can students stay outside when the air quality is unhealthy?

There isn't a set amount of time for exposure to air pollutants to cause health problems; it can happen with both short-term and long-term exposure. As air quality gets worse, it's important to take breaks, do activities less intensely, and watch for any symptoms. Students with health issues are more sensitive to bad air quality, so extra care is needed for them.

Residents may also call the local Air Quality Index Hotline numbers listed below:

- Central Ohio Air Quality Hotline: 1-888-666-1009.
- Southwestern Ohio Air Quality Hotline: 513-946-7753.
- Cleveland Department of Air Quality Hotline: (216) 664-7442.

## What symptoms should I look for in students when the air quality is unhealthy?

Symptoms of particulate pollution include burning eyes, coughing, itchy throat and nose, and shortness of breath. Asthma symptoms can include coughing, wheezing, shortness of breath, and chest tightness. Even students without asthma may experience these symptoms. Do not ignore them. Any student with symptoms should take a break until they feel better, then do a less intense activity. When air quality is very poor, stop all outdoor activities. Students with asthma should follow their asthma action plans and use their medicine as prescribed. If symptoms do not improve, seek medical help.

## What activities can students do to stay active?

When air quality is unhealthy, kids can stay active and engaged with indoor activities. Physical activities can be categorized by intensity levels:

- **Light intensity:** Playing board or card games, playing catch.
- **Moderate intensity:** Playing with a Frisbee, jumping or skipping, walking, playing on school playground equipment, playing a musical instrument.
- **Vigorous intensity:** Running, basketball, kickball, swimming, soccer, cheering, karate.

These activities ensure that children remain active even when they can't go outside. Find more physical activity recommendations at [CDC: Physical Activity for Different Groups](#).

Find more Indoor Air Quality Activities for Kids visit the American Lung Association [Indoor Air Quality Activities for Kids](#), and learn lessons for teachers and caregivers of children pre-k through middle school.

## Are certain times worse for air pollution?

- Ground-level ozone and fine particulate pollution are the two main air pollutants that cause health concerns in Ohio.
- Ozone pollution is worse in the afternoon and early evening on hot, sunny days from late May through August. It's best to plan outdoor activities in the morning when the air quality is better, and the weather is cooler.
- Fine particle pollution can be high at any time of day, both in winter and summer. Since vehicle exhaust contributes to particle pollution, avoid activities near idling cars, buses, and busy roads, especially during rush hours. Also, limit outdoor activities when there is smoke in the air.

Wildfires and ozone pollution have increased air quality alerts across Ohio. A dry summer without rain increases the risk of wildfires.

## How can I be proactive with air quality alert days?

Air pollution presents significant health risks that require attention. School health office staff should collaborate with other school personnel, students, parents, and healthcare providers to effectively manage asthma and other health conditions. Help students self-manage their asthma by ensuring they understand their asthma action plans and have their medications available for respiratory emergencies when air quality is poor. School officials should communicate air quality alerts carefully, as discussions about climate change can heighten stress and anxiety for some students. Share information calmly, avoid dramatic language, and moderate discussions for those who may become particularly anxious or fearful.

Taking part in the [Air quality flag program](#) is a way to share information calmly. Schools and organizations raise a flag each day that indicates the air quality forecast: green, yellow, orange, red or purple. These colors are based on the Environmental Protection Agency's air quality index. This is especially important for those who have asthma. When the air quality is unhealthy individuals can take actions to reduce exposure to air pollution.

### Additional asthma resources:

- Adapted from - [Minnesota Outdoor Air Quality Guidance for Schools and Child Care](#).
- Handouts - <https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/LMBBasthma/asthma-publications-patients-and-caregivers>.
- Programs and resources - <https://aafa.org/programs/>.
- Particulate Matter Factsheet: <https://odh.ohio.gov/wps/portal/gov/odh/know-our-programs/health-assessment-section/media/particulate-matter-factsheet>.
- Smoke Events Factsheet: <https://odh.ohio.gov/wps/portal/gov/odh/know-our-programs/health-assessment-section/media/smoke-events-factsheet>.
- Other chemical factsheets: <https://odh.ohio.gov/know-our-programs/health-assessment-section/resources/chemical-factsheets>.
- Air quality Flag Program: Fact Sheet-<https://www.airnow.gov/sites/default/files/2020-06/Fact%20Sheet-2020.pdf>.

### Program Contact Information:

Email: [Asthma@odh.ohio.gov](mailto:Asthma@odh.ohio.gov)

Website: <https://odh.ohio.gov/know-our-programs/asthma-program>

- Join the conversation and become a member of the Asthma Collaborative Improvement Committee. The committee holds monthly meetings from January through October and aims to unite healthcare professionals, community groups, and other stakeholders to improve asthma care in our community. CE is provided for Nursing, Sanitarian, and Social Work. Sign up for the [Asthma Collaborative Improvement Committee today!](#)
- Sign up for free email updates from the [Ohio Department of Health Asthma Program](#).

