

Air Quality Color Guide

Air Quality Index	Guidelines to protect your health
Good 0-50 Code Green	No health effects expected.
Moderate 51-100 Code Yellow	Unusually sensitive people: consider limiting prolonged or heavy exertion outdoors.
Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups 101-150 Code Orange	Children, active people, older adults, and those with heart or lung disease (like asthma): limit prolonged or heavy exertion outdoors.
Unhealthy 151-200 Code Red	Children, active people, older adults, and those with heart or lung disease (like asthma): avoid prolonged or heavy exertion. Everyone else: limit prolonged or heavy exertion outdoors.
Very Unhealthy 201-300 Code Purple	Everyone: avoid all exertion outdoors.

The daily air quality forecast covers two common air pollutants:

Ground-level ozone forms when pollutants from cars, power plants and other sources combine in hot sunlight. Ozone is a lung irritant that causes shortness of breath, irritates throats and eyes, and aggravates asthma. Ozone levels are highest outdoors from early afternoon to early evening on hot, sunny days.

Particle pollution is a mixture of very small solids and liquids suspended in air. These tiny particles can reach deep into the lungs, where they can aggravate asthma and other lung conditions, and even cause heart problems. Particle pollution can be high at any time of day or night, and any time of year. High particle levels often are caused by forest fires or residential wood burning, especially when weather conditions causes pollution to stay close to the ground.

The daily forecast always tells you which pollutant is of greatest concern.

Air Quality Forecasts and Information: www.ncair.org / 1-888-RU4NCAIR (1-888-784-6224)

Tips: Care for your air

- Conserve energy: drive less and use less electricity.
- Carpool, use public transportation, bike or walk whenever possible.
- Keep your car, boat, lawnmower and other engines tuned and maintained.
- Keep tires properly inflated and wheels aligned.
- Never burn your trash. This is illegal and releases toxic chemicals.
- Avoid burning leaves and brush, which is sometimes legal but always pollutes the air.

What Color Is Your Air?

Facts you should know about air quality

How can air quality affect your health?

Air pollution irritates the lungs and respiratory system, and can even affect the heart. Air pollution can make asthma worse, trigger asthma attacks, or cause the onset of asthma. Even healthy people can have trouble taking deep breaths on “bad air” days, and can experience damage to lung tissues. Repeated damage, especially during childhood, can reduce lung function permanently. Particle pollution, a type of air pollution, has been linked to serious cardiac problems including arrhythmias and heart attacks.

Who's at risk?

Anyone can experience health effects – whether noticed or unnoticed – at air pollution levels of code red or above. But these sensitive groups can be affected at lower levels:

- All children. Children breathe at a higher respiratory rate, their lungs are still developing, and they are likely to be active outdoors. Children also have a higher rate of asthma.
- Older adults, because they are more likely to have undiagnosed heart or lung disease.
- Anyone with respiratory disease such as asthma or emphysema, and anyone with a heart condition such as coronary artery disease or congestive heart failure.
- Anyone who is frequently active outdoors. In addition, certain “unusually sensitive” individuals can experience breathing problems even at code yellow levels.

How can you protect your health?

- Know the Code. Pay attention to the daily air quality forecast.
- Know your body. Be aware of any health conditions that may increase your risk. Notice if you experience breathing difficulties or other problems on bad air days.

- Limit your outdoor physical activity on code orange or worse days, especially if you're a member of a sensitive group. Pollution exposure depends on the length of time and level of exertion. Any activity that raises your breathing rate increases your risk. You don't need to stay indoors, but “take it easy” outdoors to reduce your risk.
- If you have a heart condition, use special caution on forecasted high particle pollution days. Particle pollution can be high at any time of day or night, unlike ozone pollution, which is highest in the afternoons. Particles also can penetrate indoors, unlike ozone, so indoor particle levels may be higher than normal on high particle pollution days. Limit indoor exertion, as well as outdoor exertion, on forecasted high particle days.
- Do your share to care for the air. Driving less, keeping your car tuned, and using less electricity reduces emissions from cars and coal-fired power plants, so that everyone can breathe easier.

How can I get the daily air quality forecast?

- Subscribe to e-mail or text forecast notifications at www.enviroflash.info
- Check the NC Division of Air Quality website at www.ncair.org
- Check your newspaper's weather page, or watch your local TV weather report. Some TV news broadcasts report orange, red, or purple forecasts only.
- Call the Air Awareness hotline at 1-888-RU4NCAIR (1-888-784-6224)

