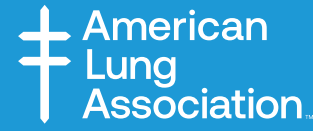








# Outdoor Air Quality Guidance for Schools & Childcare Settings



Air Quality Index		Conditions	Guidance	Duration of Outdoor Activity
	<b>Green: 0 to 50</b>	Good	It's a great day to be outside!	No restrictions
	<b>Yellow: 51 to 100</b>	Moderate	Good day to be outside! Students who are unusually sensitive to air pollution could have symptoms.	1-4 hours
	<b>Orange: 101 to 150</b>	Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups	Okay to be active outside for short activities such as recess and physical education. For longer activities such as athletic practice, take frequent breaks. Watch for symptoms and act as needed.	Less than 4 hours
	<b>Red: 151 to 200</b>	Unhealthy for Everyone	Watch for symptoms and act as needed.	Less than 4 hours
	<b>Purple: 201 to 300</b>	Very Unhealthy	Move all activities indoors or reschedule them to another day.	Not recommended
	<b>Maroon: 301 to 500</b>	Hazardous	Health warning of emergency conditions: everyone is more likely to be affected.	Not recommended

Information adapted from [airnow.gov](http://airnow.gov), *Air Quality and Outdoor Activity Guidance for Schools*; *Air Quality and Outdoor Activity Guidance for Schools*, EPA-456/F-14-003, August 2014 ([airnow.gov](http://airnow.gov))

\* Please keep in mind that there is no exact amount of time recommended that students should be exposed to unhealthy air, as both short-term and long-term exposure to air pollutants can cause a variety of health problems, but physical activity and time outdoors are also associated with learning and mental and physical health benefits. As air quality gets worse, the more important it becomes to take breaks, lower the intensity of activities, and watch for symptoms. Remember that students with health conditions such as asthma are more sensitive to unhealthy air.

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## Facts About the Air Quality Index

Air pollution can affect children who tend to be more sensitive due to their developing lungs. Schools, parents, and communities, in general, should have a plan in place when air quality is compromised. A child's asthma can be affected by extreme heat, wildfires and other natural disasters. Schools should prioritize raising awareness about how air pollution negatively affects children and those with respiratory issues such as asthma.

### Schools should create an Air Quality Action Plan for when the Air Quality Index (AQI) reaches the orange zone or worse:

- Plan to make changes in athletic events, practices, or games.
- Schedule activities during “off peak” times of year when high air pollution is not anticipated.
- Provide lower impact activities for children with asthma or those who are sensitive to particle or ozone pollution.

### Tips for schools and communities:

- Be alert when there are wildfires, smoke can travel thousands of miles.
- Check your local air quality report at [airnow.gov](http://airnow.gov). For predictions of extreme heat, visit the National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration's HeatRisk forecaster-NWS HeatRisk ([noaa.gov](http://noaa.gov))
- If possible, plan outdoor activities away from highways and other major pollution sources.
- Consider installing or updating air ventilation systems or air purifiers and follow maintenance and filter change recommendations.

### American Lung Association's Importance of Air Quality in Schools page:



## Outdoor Air Quality Resources

Through the **New York State Children's Asthma Initiative (NYSCAI)**, a joint effort of the American Lung Association and the NYS Department of Health Asthma Control Program, coordinates statewide advancement of evidence-based strategies shown to reduce the burden of asthma. NYSCAI engages health systems, schools, and community-based partners to improve the quality of guidelines-based asthma care, expand delivery of home-based asthma services, train cross-sector members of the asthma care team, and support asthma management in schools.

Visit [NYSCAInitiative.org](http://NYSCAInitiative.org) for more information.

Sign up at [NYSCAInitiative.org/contact](http://NYSCAInitiative.org/contact) to access educational resources on asthma and receive updates on NY's efforts to support children with asthma and their families.

The **New York State School Environmental Health Program (NYS SEHP)** is designed to help schools take action to create healthier learning and working environments for all students and staff across NYS.

Information on the program's 9 environmental health focus areas can be found at [Health.NY.gov/SchoolEnviroHealth](http://Health.NY.gov/SchoolEnviroHealth). Contact the program directly at [School.Environmental.Health@Health.NY.gov](mailto:School.Environmental.Health@Health.NY.gov).

The **New York State Children's Environmental Health Centers (NYSCHECK)**, a statewide network of pediatric environmental health professionals, created Prescriptions (Rx) for Prevention, to provide information on common environmental health concerns, including air quality hazards. The prescriptions explain steps for reducing exposure and provide additional resources to help address associated health concerns.

Find the Rx for Prevention at [NYSCheck.org/rx](http://NYSCheck.org/rx).

The **American Lung Association (Lung Association)** provides a variety of different air quality resources, including information about addressing air quality in the school settings. The Lung Association publishes an annual State of the Air report, which provides the public with easy-to-understand information about the quality of the air in their communities.

Find these resources at [Lung.org/clean-air](http://Lung.org/clean-air).

The **Centers for Disease Control (CDC)** has created several Clinical Overview documents for children with asthma. To find a Clinical Overview of managing Health and Children and Teens with Asthma visit [Clinical Overview of Heat and Children and Teens with Asthma | Heat Health | CDC](#)