

Air pollution and health

Information sheet – Air quality and health

Air Quality Index (AQI) is a numerical index for air pollution from 1 to 10. The higher the AQI value the greater the level of air pollution.

Air quality monitors the levels of five pollutants at present:

- ground-level ozone, O₃
- particles smaller than 10µm, PM₁₀
- carbon monoxide, CO
- sulfur dioxide, SO₂
- nitrogen dioxide, NO₂

The likely effects on health at different pollution levels are shown below.

Sensitive individuals are people who suffer from heart and lung diseases, including asthma particularly if they are elderly.

Air quality	Pollution band	Air Quality Index (AQI) value	Health descriptor
Good	Low	1, 2 or 3	Air pollution poses little or no risk. Effects are unlikely to be noticed.
Medium	Moderate	4, 5 or 6	Air quality is acceptable; however, there may be a moderate health concern for a few people who are unusually sensitive to air pollution.
Bad	High	7, 8 or 9	Everyone may begin to experience health effects; members of sensitive groups may experience more serious health effects and should avoid or reduce these effects by spending less time in polluted areas outdoors.
Very bad	Very high	10	Health alert: everyone may experience more serious health effects.