Outdoor Air Quality and Heart Disease

Poor air quality is unhealthy for everyone, but especially people with heart disease — such as heart failure or coronary artery disease. The recommendations below relate to where and when you exercise. Follow recommendations related to your specific health condition for how much you exercise. For people with heart disease, poor air quality can cause:

- Shortness of breath
- Chest pain
- Heart attack
- More hospital and emergency visits
- Greater risk of heart attack, stroke, blood clots, and early death

**The Air Quality Index (AQI)** is a number for reporting how clean or unhealthy your air is every day. You can find it on the Internet at AirNow.gov. It’s also reported in local news sources:

### When AQI is:

#### 1–50
**GOOD**
- Enjoy usual outdoor activities

#### 51–100
**MODERATE**
- Take it easy outdoors
- Exercise indoors
- If you have:
  - pain or tightness in the chest, arms, neck, back or jaw
  - palpitations
  - shortness of breath
  - unusual tiredness
  - Call your doctor and don’t exercise

#### 101–150
**UNHEALTHY** for sensitive groups
- Plan necessary outdoor activities at times of day when air quality is better (usually morning)
- Avoid outdoor air in places with a lot of traffic

#### 151–200
**UNHEALTHY**
- Always take your medications as prescribed by your doctor, especially when air quality is unhealthy

#### 201–300
**VERY UNHEALTHY**
What causes poor air quality?

Particulate matter is tiny particles in the air like dust, dirt, soot, and smoke. In northern Utah, it’s more common and more problematic in winter months. Symptoms may come several hours after exposure.

Carbon monoxide is a gas that comes from the exhaust of cars and trucks. It reduces the amount of oxygen that can get to your heart and other organs. Carbon monoxide is usually worse in cold weather.

Particulate matter and your heart

Particulate matter is sometimes reported as PM 2.5 or PM 10

PM 2.5 particles are extremely tiny. They can get into your blood and cause blood vessels to narrow. This can cause serious health problems.

PM 10 particles are a bit bigger. They include things like dust, pollen, and mold. Your nose and airways can filter some of these before they reach your heart or lungs.

More ways to take action

Pay attention to the air in your home
Be sure indoor air is free of smoke and chemical fumes. Ask your doctor if you should get an air filter.

Listen to your body
Get to know your own responses at different AQI levels — and when you need to change your plans.

Get to know your neighborhood
Pay attention to places and times of day where air quality affects you most.

Learn more
Get more information about how you can help improve air quality — both outdoors and in your home.

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