

# Air Quality and Outdoor Exercise or Work

Getting plenty of exercise is one of the best things you can do for your health. But exercising outdoors when air quality is poor can be unhealthy. When you exercise you breathe harder and faster — and take in more air. Children, older people, and people with asthma, heart, or lung disease, should talk to their doctor about exercising when the air quality is poor. If you are otherwise healthy, follow the guidelines below to exercise safely.

For people who exercise or work actively outdoors, poor air quality can cause:

**NOW**





Coughing, sore throat



Trouble breathing, chest pain, or tightness

**LONG TERM**

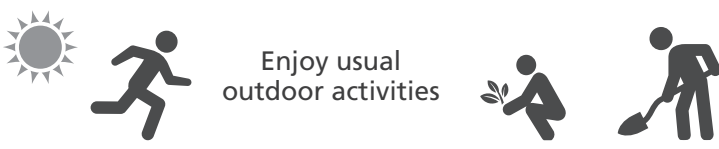






Exercising or working outdoors often in **poor air** can increase risk of heart and lung problems

**The Air Quality Index (AQI)** is a number for reporting how clean or unhealthy your air is every day.

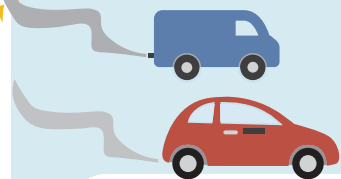
You can find it on the Internet at [AirNow.gov](http://AirNow.gov). It's also reported in local news sources:



When AQI is:	A healthy, active person should:
<p><b>1–50</b> <b>GOOD</b></p>	<p>Enjoy usual outdoor activities</p> 
<p><b>51–100</b> <b>MODERATE</b></p>	<p>Reduce outdoor exercise — not as long, not as hard</p> <p>If you have trouble breathing or you are coughing, take it easier or exercise indoors</p> 
<p><b>101–150</b> <b>UNHEALTHY</b> for sensitive groups</p>	<p>Whenever possible, don't exercise outdoors in places with a lot of traffic</p> <p>Moving even a few blocks away can help</p>
<p><b>151–200</b> <b>UNHEALTHY</b> for all</p>	
<p><b>201–300</b> <b>VERY UNHEALTHY</b> for all</p>	
<p><b>Exercise indoors</b></p> 	
	<p>Plan outdoor exercise in the morning, when air quality is usually better</p> 



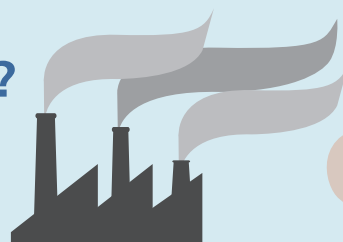
## What causes poor air quality?



Cars and trucks



Wood burning — inside or outside



Smoke stacks



Blowing dust

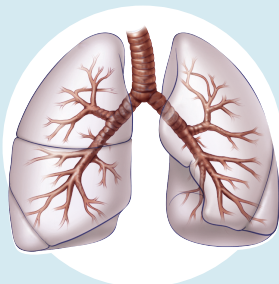
For people who are active outdoors, ozone is the biggest risk

**Ground-level ozone** is a colorless gas. It forms when polluted air comes in contact with heat and sunlight. This is more common in summer months and late in the day. Symptoms usually come right away.

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

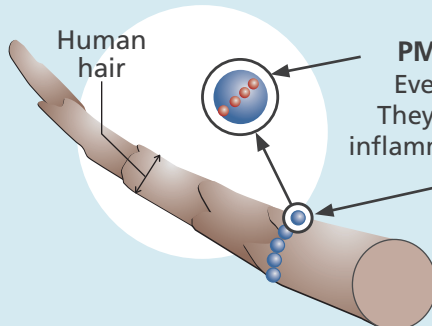
## Poor air quality and your lungs

### Ozone



Ozone damages the cells in your lungs

### Particulate matter is reported as PM 2.5 or PM 10



**PM 2.5** particles are extremely tiny. Even a face mask won't protect you. They can get into your lungs and cause inflammation. This makes breathing harder.

**PM 10** particles are a bit bigger. They include things like dust and pollen. Your nose and airways can filter some of these.

## More ways to take action



### Spread the word

If you have a coach, a team, or an employer who wants you to be active outdoors, help them learn about air quality.



### 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.

Utah Clean Air  
UCAIR.org  
AirNow.gov  
EPA.gov/  
airquality