



## QUESTIONS YOU MAY HAVE AND ANSWERS YOU NEED TO KNOW:

### WHAT DOES THE AQHI MEASURE?

The Air Quality Health Index, or AQHI, measures pollutants in the air that are particularly harmful to human health. This mix of air pollutants is derived from the combustion of fossil fuels from traffic, home heating and industry and are often grouped together under the term “smog”.

### WHY SHOULD PEOPLE WITH ASTHMA BE CONCERNED ABOUT POOR AIR QUALITY?

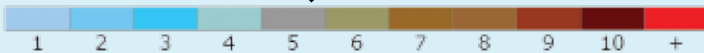
Everyone should be concerned. Outdoor air pollution affects lung health and causes exacerbations of chronic respiratory disease including asthma. The Canadian Medical Association estimates that Canada’s air pollution is responsible for 21,000 premature deaths each year and sends thousands of Canadians to the hospital. Even modest increases in air pollution can cause small but measurable increases in the number of people with asthma going to emergency rooms or getting admitted to hospital.

You can protect yourself by learning about the AQHI and changing your activities to minimize air pollution exposure.

# AIR QUALITY HEALTH INDEX AND ASTHMA

## WHAT IS NEW IN ASTHMA MANAGEMENT?

### AQHI SCALE



**AQHI OR AIR QUALITY HEALTH INDEX IS A NEW WAY TO COMMUNICATE THE LEVEL OF HEALTH RISK FROM AIR POLLUTION ON A SCALE OF 1 TO 10. THE LOWER THE INDEX, THE BETTER THE AIR QUALITY.**

IN ADDITION TO MONITORING YOUR DAY AND NIGHT SYMPTOMS, RESCUE MEDICATION USE AND EXERCISE TOLERANCE, CHECKING THE AIR QUALITY HEALTH INDEX (AQHI) ON A REGULAR BASIS WILL HELP YOU STAY HEALTHY AND IN PEAK CONDITION.

### AS A PERSON WITH ASTHMA, AT WHAT AQHI LEVEL SHOULD I CONSIDER CHANGING MY ACTIVITIES?

Enjoy your outdoor activities when the Index is between **1 and 3** unless you experience asthma symptoms. Staying active is very important in overall asthma management.

When the AQHI level is **4 to 6**, you should consider reducing or rescheduling strenuous outdoor activities, especially if you are experiencing worsening of your asthma symptoms.

An AQHI level of **7-10** means that you should reduce or reschedule strenuous outdoor activities. When the AQHI is above **10**, you should avoid outdoor strenuous activities and, if possible, move them indoors.

More importantly, learn to “Self-Calibrate” or determine the AQHI level that affects you. Some people may experience symptoms even at lower levels on the scale as each person is different. Determining the level of AQHI that affects your asthma is important to best manage your disease.



**Asthma.ca**

Asthma Society of Canada

For your asthma and allergy questions please call 1-866-787-4050 or email [info@asthma.ca](mailto:info@asthma.ca)

## BESIDES KNOWING THE AQHI WHAT SHOULD I DO TO PREPARE FOR EXPOSURE TO AIR POLLUTION?

Take control of your asthma now and manage it on a regular basis. You should be aware of any environmental triggers that exacerbate your asthma.

Start now by:

- Minimizing the exposure or avoiding known triggers
- Taking proper medications to control your asthma as prescribed
- Learning how to adjust your asthma maintenance medication according to an Asthma Action Plan
- Avoiding activities in locations where AQHI levels are high
- Making sure that you have your rescue medication with you when outdoors in case you need it
- Reviewing your asthma management regularly with your healthcare team

## ASTHMA IS THE DISEASE OF THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY

Air pollution is one of the causes for this chronic disease. Here are some ways you can help reduce exposure to air pollution:

- Walk, cycle, car pool or use public transit instead of driving.
- If you do drive, keep your car properly tuned and reduce idling.
- Consider using non-toxic alternatives for common household cleaners.
- Eliminate tobacco use.
- Burning garbage outdoors should be avoided.
- Keep your home free of moisture.

Look after your asthma by following an up to date self-management plan (Asthma Action Plan). Seek medical advice if you feel your asthma is not well controlled.

## WHERE CAN I FIND MY LOCAL AQHI READINGS?

You can find your local AQHI readings through the Weather Network, and by visiting [www.airhealth.ca](http://www.airhealth.ca) (click on “Your Local AQHI Conditions”).



### KEY MESSAGE

BOTH LONG AND SHORT TERM EXPOSURE TO AIR POLLUTION CAN CAUSE HEALTH PROBLEMS. WORSENING ASTHMA IS ASSOCIATED WITH SHORT TERM EXPOSURE TO AIR POLLUTION. LONG TERM EXPOSURE CAN AFFECT PREGNANCY, CAUSE ONSET OF ASTHMA AND DECREASE LUNG FUNCTION GROWTH, ESPECIALLY IN TEENS.



### KEY MESSAGE

FOLLOW THESE 5 EASY STEPS:

1. DETERMINE YOUR ASTHMA TRIGGERS
2. KNOW YOUR AQHI NUMBER TO DETERMINE EFFECTS OF AIR POLLUTION ON YOUR ASTHMA
3. CHECK THE AQHI REGULARLY
4. MODIFY YOUR OUTDOOR ACTIVITY IF REQUIRED
5. AVOID HIGH TRAFFIC AREAS WHEN EXERCISING OUTDOORS



### KEY MESSAGE

CALL THE ASTHMA SOCIETY OF CANADA TO CONNECT WITH AN ASTHMA EDUCATOR WHO CAN HELP YOU WITH ANY QUESTIONS RELATED TO YOUR ASTHMA CARE.

[WWW.ASTHMA.CA](http://WWW.ASTHMA.CA)

[INFO@ASTHMA.CA](mailto:INFO@ASTHMA.CA)

OR 1-866-787-4050

## WHERE DO I FIND ADDITIONAL INFORMATION?

THE ASTHMA SOCIETY OF CANADA OFFERS ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ON ASTHMA AND THE AQHI.

IT IS EASY TO STAY INFORMED AND IN CHARGE OF YOUR ASTHMA.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE VISIT THE ASTHMA SOCIETY'S AQHI WEBSITE AT: [WWW.ASTHMA.CA/AQHI](http://WWW.ASTHMA.CA/AQHI)