

Appendix F-2

Sample Air Quality Health Index Preparedness Guide

In June 2015, in partnership with Environment Canada, the Ontario Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change adopted the National Air Quality Health Index to report air quality in Ontario.

The Air Quality Health Index is a tool designed to communicate the health risk for students vulnerable to the effects of air pollution (students with diabetes, heart and lung disease) as well as for the general student body. It forecasts local air quality for the current day and the next day. It is designed to assist in health-related decisions. The index does not measure the effects of odour, pollen, dust, heat, or humidity on health.

INDEX SCALE

The Air Quality Health Index is on a 1-10 scale to indicate the level of health risk associated with local air quality. The higher the number the greater the health risk and the need to take precautions. The index descriptors associated with these numbers are: 'low', 'moderate', 'high', or 'very high'.

Exposure Category:

- Low = 1-3
- Moderate = 4-6
- High = 7-10
- Very High = 11+

HOW TO ACCESS INFORMATION ON THE AIR QUALITY HEALTH INDEX

Go to airhealth.ca and click on “Local Air Quality Health Index conditions”. Then find your province and city.

WEATHER INFORMATION

What to listen for:

- Special Air Quality Statement: when there will be a brief occurrence of high risk air quality - level 7 or higher for less than 3 hours
- Smog & Air Health Advisory: when air quality level will be level 7 or higher for 3 hours or more.

ROLE OF TEACHERS, COACHES, INTRAMURAL SUPERVISORS

Where appropriate prior to outside physical activities check the Air Quality Health Index for when and how to accommodate activities for “at risk” and general population students.

ACTIONS TO BE TAKEN

Table 1 provides the health messages for each category of the Air Quality Health Index for the “at risk” population and the general population.

People with heart or breathing problems are at greater risk. Follow your doctor's advice about exercising and managing your condition.

Table 1: Air Quality Health Index Categories and Health Messages

Health Risk	Air Quality Health Index	At Risk Population	General Population
Low	1 - 3	Enjoy your usual outdoor activities.	Ideal air quality for outdoor activities.
Moderate	4 - 6	Consider reducing or rescheduling strenuous activities outdoors if you/students are experiencing symptoms.	No need to modify your usual outdoor activities unless you/students experience symptoms such as coughing and throat irritation.
High	7 - 10	Reduce or reschedule strenuous activities outdoors. Children should also take it easy.	Consider reducing or rescheduling strenuous activities outdoors if you/students experience symptoms, such as coughing.
Very High	Above 10	Avoid strenuous activities outdoors.	Reduce or reschedule strenuous activities

Health Risk	Air Quality Health Index	At Risk Population	General Population
		Children should avoid outdoor physical exertion.	outdoors, especially if you/students experience symptoms, such as coughing and throat irritation.

Source: Environment Canada, 2017