



AIR QUALITY INFORMATION FOR OUR SCHOOLS

Wildland Fires and Smoke Exposure

How does smoke in the air affect my health?

How smoke conditions may affect your health is determined by a number of factors, such as the length of time you are exposed, how much air you breathe in, your health status and the concentration of smoke in the air.



Who is most at risk?

Infants and young children, pregnant people, the elderly and people with existing illness or chronic health conditions such as cancer, diabetes, mental illness and heart or lung conditions are more sensitive to the adverse effects of exposure to smoke. People participating in sports or strenuous work outdoors may also be more susceptible since they are breathing air deeply and rapidly. Risks increase when smoke becomes heavier and as the length of time a person is exposed increases.

Wildland Fires and Smoke During School Hours

When dealing with wildfire smoke, schools play a crucial role in protecting students and staff from the harmful effects. Here are some recommended actions schools can take:

Monitor air quality to modify outdoor activities

Familiarize yourself with the [AQHI categories](#) and what they mean for health: (e.g. “Good (Low Risk),” “Moderate (Risk),” “Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups (High Risk),” “Unhealthy (Very High Risk)”).

- **Low (1-3):** Ideal air quality for outdoor activities. Continue normal activities.
- **Moderate (4-6):** Continue normal activities, unless you experience symptoms (coughing & throat irritation). Monitor AQHI.
- **High (7-10):** Consider rescheduling recess, physical education and sports practices if you experience symptoms (coughing & throat irritation). Plan for alternative activities that do not require physical exertion when air quality is poor.
- **Very High (10+):** Reduce or reschedule strenuous activities outdoors if you experience symptoms (coughing & throat irritation). Children and elderly should avoid outdoor physical exertion.



Improve indoor air quality

Keep windows closed to prevent outdoor air from entering the building or use air purifiers. Set air conditioning to recirculate to avoid drawing smoke indoors. Use fans to circulate the air and keep the room cool.

Ensure student health and safety

Monitoring health symptoms (coughing, sore eyes or difficulty breathing) and having a plan in place for sensitive individuals.

Communicate with parents and staff

Staff should communicate any changes to school activities or schedules.

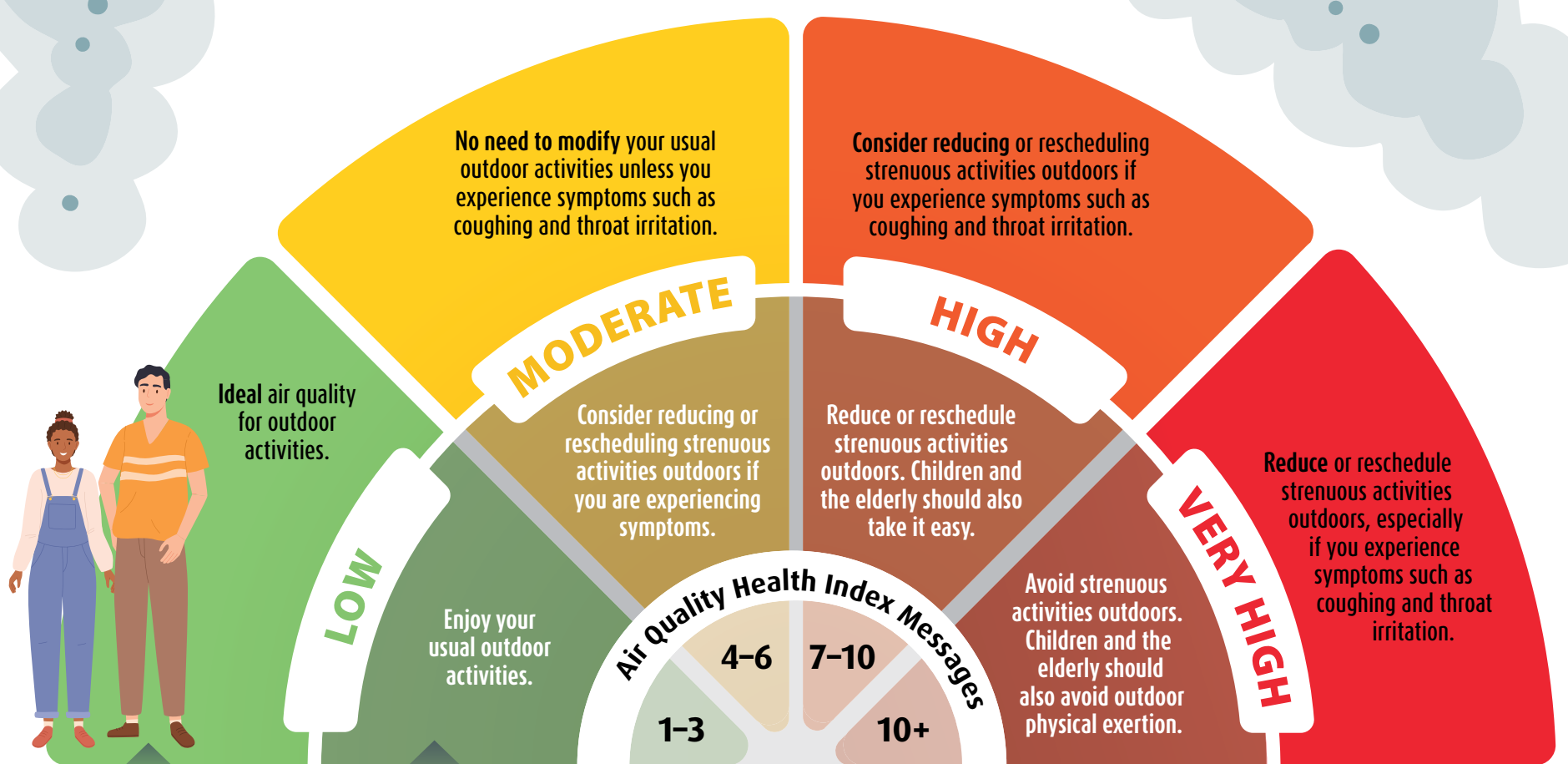
Sources: https://weather.gc.ca/airquality/healthmessage_e.html
https://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/docs/sector_coms/air_quality_eng.pdf

Air Quality and You

Poor air quality, caused by pollution or wildfire smoke, can significantly affect your health.

The Government of Canada monitors the impact of air quality on people's health using an **Air Quality Health Index (AQHI)**. When the index is high or very high, an air quality statement or advisory will be issued.

This includes health messaging for **general and at-risk populations**.



Source: Environment and Natural Resources Canada. "Air Quality Health Index Messages." https://weather.gc.ca/airquality/healthmessage_e.html

GENERAL POPULATION

AT-RISK POPULATION

- People exercising strenuously outdoors
- People with an existing illness or chronic health conditions, such as cancer, diabetes, mental illness, and lung or heart conditions
 - Infants and young children
 - People who work outdoors
 - Pregnant people
 - Seniors

During the wildfire season, you can reduce the impacts of poor air quality by doing the following:



Drinking plenty of water to remain well hydrated.



Setting air conditioning units to recirculate to avoid drawing smoke indoors, including in cars.



Turning on room air cleaners with HEPA filters, if available.



Staying indoors with windows and doors closed, using fans to circulate the air and keep the room cool.



Keeping indoor air cleaner by avoiding smoking or burning other materials.

Manitoba

