

# Children and Air Quality

*Be Air Aware*



AIR CENTRAL TEXAS

## Be Air Aware

Air Central Texas (ACT) is encouraging parents and guardians of children to Be Air Aware by taking action to reduce their children's exposure to outdoor air pollution. Children with asthma can be particularly sensitive to air pollution, since it can trigger asthma attacks.

- Based on the Air Quality Index (AQI), there are around 33% of days when air pollution levels in Central Texas is "Moderate" or worse\*
- "Sensitive groups" which includes children of all ages, seniors, and adults with lung diseases, and make up about 40% of the population in Central Texas

\*based on air quality data between Jan. 2015 and Dec. 2017

## Are All Children Sensitive to Air Pollution?

Yes – all children, including teenagers, are considered a "sensitive" group for air pollution and could experience health impacts on days when air pollution is considered "Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups." Children with asthma are even more vulnerable

to health problems caused by air pollution and may also be sensitive to "Moderate" air pollution levels.

Children are at higher risk from air pollution because:

- They often play outdoors
- They are more likely to have asthma, which may be aggravated by exposure to air pollution
- Their lungs are still developing

## What is the Air Quality Index?

The AQI is a tool that members of the public can use to determine which steps to take to protect themselves and their families from air pollution. Weather reports often include an air quality forecast that you can use to help know whether you or your family's health may be at risk.

Air Quality Index	Air Quality	Who Needs to be Concerned?	What Should I Do?
0-50	Good	n/a	Go Outside!
51-100	Moderate	People unusually sensitive to air pollution	Consider reducing prolonged or heavy exertion.
101-150	Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups	Children and teenagers, people with heart or lung disease, older adults	Reduce prolonged or heavy exertion. If asthmatic, keep relief medicine handy.
151-200	Unhealthy	Everyone	Avoid or reduce prolonged or heavy exertion if sensitive.

For more information on the AQI, visit [AirNow.gov](http://AirNow.gov).

## What Can I Do to Reduce My Child's Exposure to Outdoor Air Pollution?

- Check the air quality forecast for the day by checking your local weather forecast or visiting [www.AirCentralTexas.org](http://www.AirCentralTexas.org).
- Encourage your favorite local meteorologist to include a daily air quality forecast if he or she doesn't already
- Download and use the AirNow app onto your phone
- Sign up for the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality's (TCEQ's) daily air quality forecast e-mails
- Encourage your children's school administrators and coaches to check air quality forecasts and have a plan in place when air quality is forecast to be "Moderate" or worse

## What Can I Do to Reduce Air Pollution?

In addition to reducing exposure to air pollution when it occurs, you can also help reduce air pollution levels by avoiding activities that can contribute to poor air quality. Things that you can do to help reduce emissions, particularly on days when air quality is forecast to be "Moderate" or worse include:

- Encourage your children to walk, bike, or take the bus to school
- Avoid unnecessary side-trips or mowing your lawn during the middle of the day
- Avoid idling your vehicle

## What is Air Central Texas?

ACT is an initiative to reduce exposure to air pollution in Bastrop, Caldwell, Hays, Travis, and Williamson Counties. ACT encourages residents to take voluntary actions to reduce emissions to avoid exposure to high pollution levels when they occur. Participants include local governments, regional and state government agencies, non-profit groups and institutions, and businesses. For more information, visit [www.AirCentralTexas.org](http://www.AirCentralTexas.org).



AIR CENTRAL TEXAS