



**NORTHEAST**

**Working**

**OHIO**

**Together**

**OZONE**

**For**

**ACTION**

**Cleaner**

**DAY**

**Air**

**PROGRAM**

## Ozone and Health Effects

Air pollution can trigger asthma attacks! Vehicle exhaust and industrial emissions are major sources of pollution that form ozone, which is one type of air pollution that appears in the summer.

The United States Environmental Protection Agency says this:

“Nationwide, 20 million Americans suffer from asthma, a chronic respiratory disease that killed almost 5,000 people in 2000. Among Hispanics, more than 2 million suffer from asthma, and a number of studies have found that people living in Puerto Rico or of Puerto Rican descent report higher rates of asthma than other Hispanic groups. Hispanics also report more asthma attacks and emergency room visits for asthma treatment than other ethnic groups.”

“USEPA hopes to reduce asthma attacks by increasing awareness about the role of environmental asthma triggers in causing and exacerbating asthma.

“Asthma is a major public health problem in the U.S., costing over \$14 billion in 2002 for health expenditures and lost productivity. Asthma rates have skyrocketed since 1980, and children have been particularly hard hit by the asthma epidemic. Recently, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reported that 9 million children in the U.S. have been diagnosed with asthma and 4 million children had asthma attacks within the last year. Children are disproportionately affected by asthma, and asthma is the leading chronic illness among children. Nearly 1 in 13 school-age children has asthma and the rate is rising more rapidly in preschool-aged children than in any other age group.

“Ozone can aggravate asthma. When ozone levels are high, more people with asthma have attacks that require a doctor's attention or the use of additional medication. One reason this happens is that ozone makes people more sensitive to indoor and outdoor allergens such as pet dander, pollen, dust mites, mold, and pests, which are common triggers of asthma attacks. People with asthma are most severely affected by the reduced lung function and irritation that ozone causes in the respiratory system.

“In addition to releasing a new Spanish asthma video, USEPA posts information on its Web site, <http://www.epa.gov/asthma>, in both English and Spanish, on how to identify and manage asthma triggers. Tips for reducing asthma attacks include avoiding secondhand smoke, keeping pets outside or away from sleeping areas, washing bedding weekly in hot water, avoiding mold growth by reducing moisture, and checking the Air Quality Index (AQI) report for information on outdoor air quality.”

NOACA reports the AQI for ozone every day in the summer. You can sign up for a free e-mail alert for Ozone Action Days! Just log on to: [www.noaca.org/oad.html](http://www.noaca.org/oad.html)

If you don't have the time or a computer handy to check the AQI, just remember this:

- ❖ If it is hot, sunny, and muggy outdoors, air pollution is probably high.
- ❖ Stay indoors on air pollution days.
- ❖ Run the air conditioner if you can.
- ❖ Don't exercise outdoors.
- ❖ Don't mow your lawn.
- ❖ Just take it easy, and give your lungs a vacation day!

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