

Ozone Pollution and Your Health

According to recent figures compiled by the American Lung Association, nearly one-third of the U.S. population live in areas with unhealthy levels of ozone. Preventing the formation of ground-level ozone through programs such as Ozone Alert! is not only an environmental concern, but also a health concern.

Ozone Season

Ozone levels typically rise in much of the nation between May and October due to a combination of higher temperatures, more sunlight, and stagnant air masses.

At-Risk Groups

Several groups of people are particularly sensitive to ozone – especially when they are active outdoors – because physical activity causes people to breathe faster and more deeply.

- Active children are the group at highest risk from ozone exposure because they often spend a large part of the summer playing outdoors. Children are also more likely to have asthma, which may be aggravated by ozone exposure.
- Active adults of all ages who exercise or work vigorously outdoors have a higher level of exposure to ozone than people who are less active.
- People with asthma or other respiratory diseases that make the lungs more vulnerable to the effects of ozone will generally experience health effects earlier and at lower ozone levels than less sensitive individuals.
- People with unusual susceptibility to ozone. Scientists don't yet know why, but some healthy people may experience health effects at more moderate levels of outdoor exertion or at lower ozone levels than the average person.

In general, as concentrations of ground-level ozone increase, more and more people experience health effects, the effects become more serious, and more people are admitted to the hospital for respiratory problems. When ozone levels are very high, everyone should be concerned about ozone exposure.

Health Effects

Many areas in the United States have enough ground-level ozone during the summer months to cause health problems that can be felt right away. Immediate problems are:

- Shortness of breath
- Chest pain when inhaling deeply
- Wheezing and coughing
- Increased susceptibility to respiratory infections
- Inflammation of the lungs and airways
- Increased risk of asthma attacks
- Increased need for medical treatment and hospital admission for people with lung diseases, like asthma or chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD).

Learn more about the Ozone Alert Program at www.OzoneAlert.com

