

## Being overcome by smog and/or heat while exercising can be serious.

Stop exercising and seek medical help as soon as possible if you or someone else has the following symptoms:

- difficulty breathing
- weakness or fainting
- feeling more tired than usual
- nausea
- headache
- confusion

Help a sick person by:

- calling for medical help
- removing excess clothing from the person
- cooling the person down by patting or sponging with lukewarm water
- moving the person indoors to a cooler place
- giving the person sips of cool water (not ice cold water) or a sports drink.

## For more information

**Toronto Public Health**

[www.toronto.ca/health](http://www.toronto.ca/health)

Toronto Health Connection

416-338-7600

**Ministry of the Environment**

[www.airqualityontario.com](http://www.airqualityontario.com)

Air Quality Index (AQI) Hotline

416-246-0411



# Outdoor exercise during heat & smog alerts

 **TORONTO**  
Public Health

Protecting your health

## Exercising outdoors during a smog or heat alert?

High smog and heat levels can be dangerous. Toronto Public Health estimates because of air pollution, every year 1,700 people die earlier than expected and 6,000 hospital visits are linked to heart or lung diseases.

**A smog alert** is issued when smog conditions reach dangerous levels (i.e. Air Quality Index reaches or exceeds 50). Most of Toronto's smog (a mixture of air pollutants on hot summer days), comes from the burning of fossil fuels to run motor vehicles and generate electricity.

**A heat alert** is issued when the combination of heat, humidity and other weather conditions can be very dangerous.

### Health risks may increase during high smog or heat levels for:

- those who play sports or exercise outdoors
- cyclists
- others active outside (eg. gardeners)

Parents, coaches and others supervising children should also be aware of the risks during a smog or heat alert.

## How air pollution and heat affect your body

When you exercise or do hard physical work, you breathe harder than normal, bringing dirty air deeper into your lungs. You also breathe mostly through your mouth, bypassing the filtering action of the nose.

If you exercise when it is very hot, your body temperature will get very high and your body has to work extra hard to keep cool.

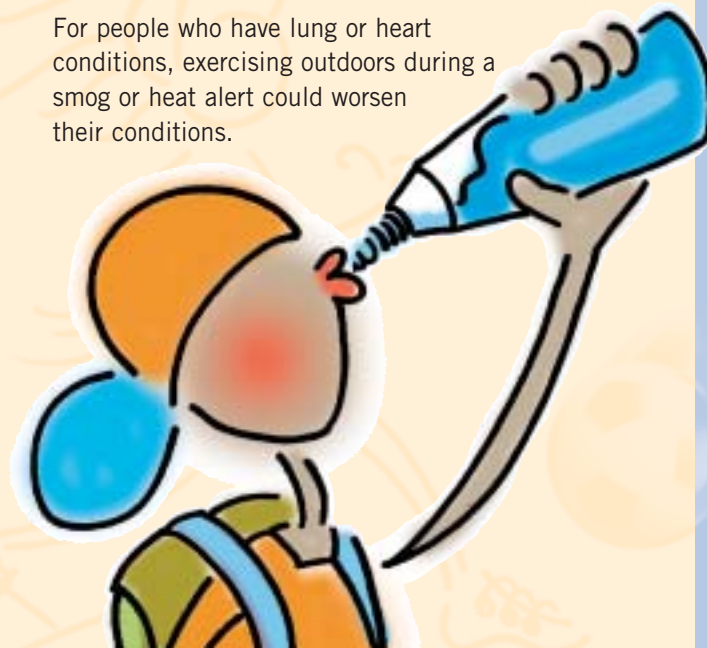
### When exercising outdoors during a smog alert, even healthy people may:

- cough and/or wheeze
- feel irritation in their throat
- have difficulty breathing
- inflame and damage lung cells (short and long term)
- reduce the immune system's ability to fight off respiratory bacterial infections
- have difficulty performing their best (the lungs can't work at full capacity)
- die earlier than expected

### People exercising outdoors during a heat alert may:

- get heat cramps – muscle pains in the legs, arms or abdomen
- have a very high body temperature that could damage vital organs
- suffer from headache, nausea, dizziness, confusion and/or weakness due to heat-related illness
- die earlier than expected

For people who have lung or heart conditions, exercising outdoors during a smog or heat alert could worsen their conditions.



## Protecting your health during smog & heat alerts

**Reschedule** sports practices, jogging times, etc. if possible, to another time when the smog or heat alert is over. Or you could work out indoors in an air conditioned area. Plan ahead by asking for policies to reschedule sports events during smog and heat alerts.

### If you're going to be active outdoors:

- drink plenty of water before, during and after exercise (during exercise, drink water every 15 – 20 minutes)
- wear loose-fitting clothes that allow for evaporation of sweat
- wear a hat and use sunscreen (at least SPF 15)
- take lots of rest breaks, preferably in the shade or an air conditioned area
- exercise or play sports in shaded areas
- if jogging or cycling, avoid busy streets, especially during rush hours
- reduce activity level if you experience symptoms such as coughing, wheezing, chest tightness and/or difficulty breathing