



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

HKPR District Health Unit Advises Air Quality Health Index Moves to High Risk

Consider reducing strenuous outdoor activities if you experience symptoms such as coughing and throat irritation.

Port Hope, ON (June 6, 2023) – The [Haliburton, Kawartha, Pine Ridge District Health Unit](#) (HKPR District Health Unit) would like to advise residents of the City of Kawartha Lakes, Haliburton County and Northumberland County that the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks (MECP) [Air Quality Health Index \(AQHI\)](#) has now moved to high risk due to smoke from ongoing forest fires.

“The current smoke plumes from forest fires throughout Ontario and Quebec are leading to worsening air quality, moving the air quality health index to high risk,” said Dr. Natalie Bocking, Medical Officer of Health, and Chief Executive Officer for the HKPR District Health Unit. “For those who may be at risk due to other health reasons we are advising you to please prioritize your health by reducing your exposure.”

Public health officials refer to the MECP’s [Air Quality Health Index \(AQHI\)](#), which uses data from 39 air monitoring stations that collect real-time air pollution data and report on key pollutants that are indicators of overall outdoor air quality. The AQHI hourly values and daily forecasts are calculated and produced by ECCC and posted hourly, 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

The AQHI table below shows the health risk associated with the air pollution we breathe presented on a scale of 1 to 10+ with four health risk categories. Each category also provides direction on health measures for ‘at risk’ individuals and the general population.

Health Risk	Air Quality Health Index	Health Messages – At Risk Population ^[2]	Health Messages – General Population
Low	1-3	Enjoy your usual outdoor activities	Ideal air quality for outdoor activities.
Moderate	4-6	Consider reducing or rescheduling strenuous activities outdoors if you are experiencing symptoms.	No need to modify your usual activities unless you experience symptoms such as coughing and throat irritation.
High	7-10	Reduce or reschedule strenuous activities outdoors. Children and the elderly should also take it easy.	Consider reducing or rescheduling strenuous activities outdoors if you experience symptoms such as coughing and throat irritation.
Very High	Above 10	Avoid strenuous activities outdoors. Children and the elderly should also avoid outdoor physical exertion.	Reduce or reschedule strenuous activities outdoors, especially if you experience symptoms such as coughing and throat irritation.

Source: Environment & Climate Change Canada

Health Measures for the General Population

Reduce or reschedule strenuous activities outdoors, especially if you experience symptoms such as coughing and throat irritation.

Health Measures for the At Risk Population

Individuals with lung disease (such as asthma) or heart disease, older adults, children, pregnant women, and those who work outdoors are at higher risk of experiencing health effects caused by wildfire smoke.

- Reduce or reschedule strenuous activities outdoors. Children and the elderly should also take it easy.
- Improve your air quality by changing your furnace filters.
- [Find out if you are at risk](#)

More Public Health Information

The HKPR District Health Unit encourages residents and visitors to follow the Air Quality Health Index by visiting the [AQHI webpage](#), on the [WeatherCan app](#) and on the [Weather Alerts page](#). For further information please refer to our [Wildfires and Air Quality webpage](#).

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About the Haliburton, Kawartha Pine Ridge District Health Unit

The Haliburton, Kawartha, Pine Ridge District Health Unit provides important public health programs and services to residents in Northumberland County, Haliburton County, and the City of Kawartha Lakes. Our dedicated team of public health professionals, led by our Medical Officer of Health, promote healthy living, protect against disease, and prevent illness and injury. We work with health care providers and community partners to address emerging health issues, service gaps and social inequities to support residents in being well and reaching their full potential. Our values of trust, engagement, accountability, and leadership guide what we do every day. Learn more at www.hkpr.on.ca.