

Air Quality Guide for School Activities & Sports

Outside Air Quality Index | PM2.5

Fine particle pollution such as wildfire smoke, dust, vehicle exhaust, and industrial and woodstove emissions are known as PM2.5. PM2.5 can seriously affect children’s health. The following health recommendations are designed to protect children from PM2.5 and may be applied to school and child care activities, sports events, camps and after school programs. Current air quality can be found at [PSCleanAir.gov](https://www.pscleanair.gov).

	GOOD <i>0-50</i>	MODERATE <i>51-100</i>	UNHEALTHY <i>FOR SENSITIVE GROUPS</i> <i>101-150</i>	UNHEALTHY <i>151-200</i>	VERY UNHEALTHY <i>& HAZARDOUS</i> <i>>200</i>
Recess <i>(15 minutes)</i>	No restrictions.	Allow students with health conditions* to stay indoors.	Keep students with health conditions *indoors. Keep activity levels light for these students unless indoor PM2.5 levels are below 35.5 µg/m ³ .	Keep all students indoors. Keep activity levels light unless indoor PM2.5 levels are below 35.5 µg/m ³ .	Keep all students indoors and keep activity levels light unless indoor air is filtered, and indoor PM2.5 levels are below 35.5 µg/m ³ .
P.E. <i>(1 hour)</i>	No restrictions.	Allow students with health conditions* to stay indoors and monitor symptoms for those who participate. Increase rest periods for these children as needed.	Keep children with health conditions *indoors. Keep activities light for these children unless indoor PM2.5 levels are below 35.5 µg/m ³ . For others, limit to light outdoor activities. Allow any children to stay indoors if they do not want to go outside.	Keep all students indoors. Keep activity levels light unless indoor PM2.5 levels are below 35.5 µg/m ³ .	Keep all students indoors. Keep activity levels light unless indoor air is filtered, and indoor PM2.5 levels are below 35.5 µg/m ³ .
Athletic Events & Practices <i>(Vigorous activity 2-3 hours)</i>	No restrictions.	Allow students with health conditions* to opt out and monitor symptoms for those who join. Increase rest periods for these children.	Cancel outdoor athletic events and practices or move them to an area with safer air quality, either indoors or a different location.	Cancel outdoor athletic events and practices or move them to an area with safer air quality, either indoors or a different location. Consider time spent in poor air quality during transit before relocating.	Cancel outdoor athletic events and practices or move them to an area with safer air quality, either indoors with filtered air or a different location. Consider time spent in poor air quality during transit before relocating.

Note: Asthma Action plans should be followed regardless of air quality for all levels of activity. When air quality is diminished, individuals should pay special attention to their Asthma Action plan.

*Health conditions include asthma and other lung disease, respiratory infection, heart disease, and diabetes.

Light Activities	Playing board games, throwing and catching while standing, and cup stacking.
Moderate Activities	Yoga, shooting basketballs, dance instruction, and ping pong.
Vigorous Activities	Running, jogging, basketball, football, soccer, swimming, cheerleading, and jumping rope.



School Closures and Outdoor Event Cancellations

School closures are the decision of the individual school district, usually in consultation with the local health department. Outdoor event cancellations are the decision of the event coordinators, usually in consultation with local health department. Consult Snohomish County Health Department if you have questions about air pollution and health at snohd.org.

Fine Particles, Indoor Air Quality, and Health

Air pollution from wildfires, outdoor burning, wood heating, and traffic can increase fine particles in the air you breathe. Weather patterns such as high pressure systems or air stagnations can keep air pollutants from dispersing, resulting in unhealthy air quality.

Fine particles travel easily indoors, especially if ventilation systems are drawing outside air. Fine particles come in around doors, windows, and small openings. Over time, concentrations of fine particles indoors can approach concentrations outdoors.

Exercising students breathe deeper and more often and take in more air, and more air pollution, into their lungs. Breathing polluted air can cause health problems, including aggravating asthma and other respiratory diseases. Anyone experiencing symptoms such as wheezing, shortness of breath, chest pain, headache, and dizziness should be seen by a medical provider.

Schools should reduce student activities when air quality has reached the “Unhealthy for Sensitive

Groups” category. Individual students with allergies, asthma, respiratory or heart conditions may need to stay indoors when air quality is in the “Moderate” category.

School buildings with enhanced filtration systems will have improved indoor air quality. Supplemental use of properly sized HEPA-Charcoal air filters that do not produce ozone has been shown to improve indoor air quality by reducing fine particles and chemicals in smoke.

The Washington State Department of Health’s document, [Improving Ventilation and Indoor Air Quality during Wildfire Smoke Events](#), provides information about air pollutants, identifies ways to improve your building’s indoor air quality, and includes helpful links for information about portable air cleaners. This and other documents are available online:

doh.wa.gov/SmokeFromFires

doh.wa.gov/CommunityandEnvironment/AirQuality/OutdoorAir

**For Snohomish County
Air Quality Conditions**

visit or call

PSCleanAir.gov

800.552.3565