

Health Advisory for Haze**

June to October is traditionally the dry season for South East Asia. Trans-boundary smoke haze from forest fires during the dry season has been a recurrent problem, affecting Singapore and the region. Singapore's air quality, expressed in PSI (Pollutant Standards Index), is closely monitored by the National Environment Agency.

Haze affects our health by irritating our airways, skin and eyes. It is possible for people to experience sneezing, running nose, eye irritation or cough due to the haze, but the effects are generally mild can be treated easily. There is no cause for concern as long as the PSI readings are less than or equal to 100.

Eye irritation may be relieved by applying eyedrops, which can be purchased from any pharmacy or clinic. Persons wearing contact lenses who experience eye irritation are advised to discontinue wearing contact lenses temporarily.

Persons with sneezing, running nose, sore throat or cough can seek medical advice. Our Healthway Medical Group Clinics can dispense medications which effectively control such symptoms.

As PSI readings increase, people who are more susceptible to haze, like those with respiratory and certain heart conditions, become more likely to experience haze related symptoms like breathlessness. Conditions like Asthma, Nasal Allergies, Skin Allergies and Chronic Lung Illnesses are also more likely to be worsened by the haze. In the unlikely event that PSI readings increase to hazardous levels, even healthy individuals may experience increasingly severe haze related symptoms. Persons who experience breathlessness or develop Asthma and those who have persistent or worsening symptoms are advised to seek early medical attention. Simple everyday measures that we can adopt to minimize the health effects of significant haze include staying indoors and avoiding vigorous physical activity. The following table, adapted from the National Environment Agency website, summarizes the recommended preventive measures we should adopt based on air quality as reflected by PSI.

Index Value	PSI Descriptor	General Health Effects	Cautionary Statements
Up to 50	Good	Good	None for the general population
51 to 100	Moderate	Few or none for the general population	None required
101 to 200	Unhealthy	Mild aggravation of symptoms among susceptible persons ie. those with underlying conditions such as chronic heart or lung ailments; transient symptoms of irritation eg. eye irritation, sneezing or coughing in some of the healthy population.	Persons with existing heart or respiratory ailments should reduce physical exertion and outdoor activity. The general population should reduce vigorous outdoor activity.

** Source : National Environment Agency – NEA Website – Haze – PSI Advisories.
Available from: http://app2.nea.gov.sg/psi_hazeplan.aspx

201 to 300	Very Unhealthy	Moderate aggravation of symptoms and decreased tolerance in persons with heart or lung disease ; more widespread symptoms of transient irritation in the healthy population.	Elderly and persons with existing heart or lung disease should stay indoors and reduce physical exertion and outdoor activity. The general population should avoid vigorous outdoor activity.
301 to 400	Hazardous	Early onset of certain diseases in addition to significant aggravation of symptoms in susceptible persons; and decreased exercise tolerance in healthy persons.	Children, elderly and persons with existing diseases should stay indoors and avoid outdoor activity. The general population should avoid all unnecessary outdoor activity.
Over 400	Hazardous	PSI levels above 400 may be life-threatening to ill and elderly persons. Healthy people may experience adverse symptoms that affect normal activity.	Children, elderly and persons with existing diseases should stay indoors, keeping the windows and doors closed and avoiding physical exertion as far as possible. Outdoor activity should be avoided. The general population should keep physical exertion and outdoor activity to as low a level as possible.

* The index value refers to the 24-hour Pollutant Standards Index (PSI) value and not to the 3-hour PSI value. Only the 24-hour PSI value is correlated to the health effects outlined.

If you need medical assistance, call the SBCC Baby & Child Clinic – Asthma, Lung, Sleep & Allergy Centre at 6475 0820. Gleneagles Medical Centre #07-05 Singapore 159086.