OZONE ACTION DAYS

Do Your Share For Cleaner Air

Ozone – What You Can't See Can Hurt You

Ozone–Good Up High, Bad Nearby

The word "ozone" has prompted confusion and debate over the past few years. This confusion persists in part because ozone conjures up both good and bad images. In fact, both perceptions are correct. This invisible gas can be found in both the upper and lower atmospheres. The ozone layer in the upper atmosphere is essential to life because it filters harmful ultraviolet radiation from the sun, reducing the amount reaching the earth's surface. High concentrations of ozone near ground level, however, can be harmful to people, animals, crops, and other materials. Unfortunately, ground-level ozone dissipates before it reaches the upper atmosphere where it could help filter the sun's harmful rays.

What Is Ground-Level Ozone And Where Does It Come From?

Ground-level ozone is the main ingredient in urban smog. In the presence of sunlight and heat, air pollutants react to produce ground-level ozone smog. These pollutants have many sources. Some sources, such as automobiles, trucks, buses, and industrial smoke stacks, are obvious. Others are not so obvious, such as gasoline stations, outboard motors, oil-based paints, and household products, as well as lawn, garden, farm, and construction equipment.

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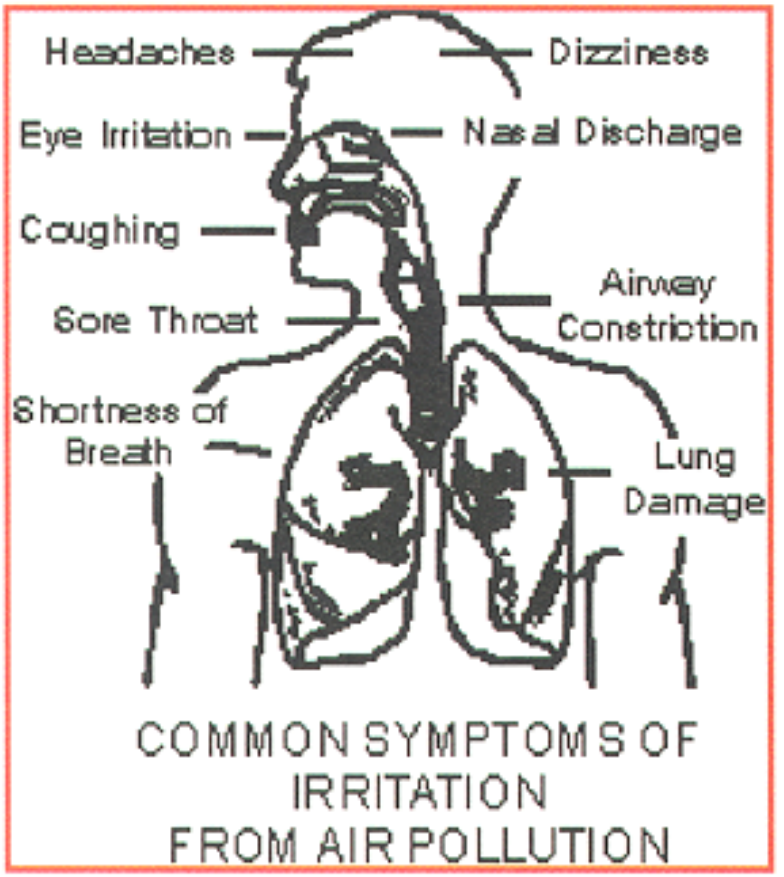
Is Ozone Harmful To My Health?



Yes. High concentrations of ozone can cause shortness of breath, coughing, wheezing, headaches, nausea, and eye and throat irritation. Long-term effects may include reduced lung function and scarring of lung tissue. People who suffer from lung diseases such as emphysema, pneumonia, asthma, and colds have even more trouble breathing when the air is polluted. These effects can be more severe in children and exercising adults.

Why Are Children Especially Vulnerable?

Children often play outside on hot, muggy summer afternoons. Their lungs are still developing, and they breathe more rapidly and inhale more air pollution per pound of body weight than adults. On days when ozone smog levels are high, these factors put children at increased risk for respiratory problems.