

## Air Quality and Health

The consequence of poor air quality and human health is a subject which continues to be researched. The air is a lot cleaner today than it was in the days of the smog in the 1950s. On an average day in the UK the levels of air pollution experienced are unlikely to have any serious short term effects on a healthy person. On some occasions when air quality levels are high, some people may feel eye irritation; others may start to cough and some may find breathing deeply painful. People with lung diseases or heart conditions are more likely to notice the effects of changes in air pollution levels, particularly if they are elderly. To make it easier to understand the Government has introduced the following banding system

<b>Pollution Band</b>	<b>Health Impact</b>
<b>Low</b>	Effects are unlikely to be noticed, even by people who know they are sensitive to air pollutants
<b>Moderate</b>	Mild effects are unlikely to require action, but may be noticed by sensitive people
<b>High</b>	Sensitive people may notice significant effects, and may have to take action to reduce or avoid them (for example, by reducing time spent outdoors). Asthmatics will find that their 'reliever' inhaler is likely to reverse the effects of pollution on their lungs
<b>Very High</b>	The effects on sensitive people, described for 'high' levels of pollution, may worsen

The understanding of the long term health effects of exposure to air pollution is currently rather limited, but experts suggest that cutting long term exposure to fine particles by half could increase life expectancy by between 1 and 11 months on average. This is not as great as the effect of smoking on life expectancy.