

The Air We Breathe

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I

Look at this picture. Have you ever stopped to ask yourself: "Is the air safe* to breathe? Am I breathing poison? Is it safe for me to be outside?" Air is the most important thing in our lives. We cannot see it or feel it, but without it we cannot breathe.

II

Today, our air is in danger. We all know that cars and buses cause air pollution. But factories also put poison into the air we breathe. This pollution hurts people, animals and even plants. For example, factories in the USA release 3,000 tons of poison into the air every day. That's the weight of 15 Statues of Liberty*. The city of Los Angeles is one of the most polluted cities in the world. This city has suffered from air pollution for over 100 years. One day in 1903, the black clouds over the city were so full of dirt and so thick that they covered the city. People looked up and couldn't see the sun. They thought that it was an eclipse* of the sun.

III

A hundred years later, air pollution is much worse. How dirty is the air? Many cities in the world now give information so that people know how dangerous the air is every day. Some days it's dangerous to go outside because the air is so dirty. People can read information about pollution levels and decide what to do - to stay inside or to go outside. This table is an example of the information that people can find.

AIR

Good

WHAT TO DO

The air is clean. You can be outside as much as you want.

Can Be Dangerous

The air is dirty. Do not stay outside for a long time.

Very Dangerous

The air is very dirty.
Stay inside. Do not go outside.

IV

It's important to know what causes air pollution. We don't always think about the problem because we cannot see it, but air pollution is there. When we know the facts, we can decide what we can do to help stop it.

Air is not only outside us. It is inside us, too.