

<p><b>IN THIS ISSUE:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Giant Hogweed Alert</b></li> <li>▪ <b>Air Quality Health Index</b></li> </ul>	<p><b>FROM:</b></p> <p>David L. Mowat, MBChB MPH FRCPC Medical Officer of Health</p>
--	--

**Giant Hogweed Alert**

Background

Giant Hogweed has been found growing in Peel Region in unmaintained, naturalized areas. Giant hogweed has hollow stems with dark reddish-purple splotches and coarse white hair. It can grow up to 15 feet in height. The leaves of the plant can grow up to five feet in width and have hairs on the underside. The plant, which generates small white flowers, also produces flattened oval shaped fruit during summer months.

This invasive plant poses a risk to human health. Contact with the plant's clear watery sap combined with exposure to light can cause a significant dermatitis. In addition, contact with the eyes can cause temporary or permanent blindness.

Symptoms

Patients with the following symptoms should be questioned about possible exposure to giant hogweed:

- Phototoxic inflammatory eruption which usually appears 24 hours after exposure and peaks within 48-72 hours
- Initial burning erythema followed by blistering
- Pigmented purple and black scarring that may last for long periods.

Treatment

Treatment of the inflammatory condition should be based on severity of symptoms.

- Treat mild reactions with cool wet dressings, topical steroids, and nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs).

- Severe reactions should be treated in consultation with a dermatologist.

For more information about giant hogweed, including photos of the plant and phototoxic reaction, visit <http://www.peelregion.ca/health/topics/injury/giant-hogweed.htm>

**Air Quality Health Index**

- The Air Quality Health Index (AQHI) is a tool that indicates the level of health risk associated with local air quality using a simple 10 point scale - the higher the number, the greater the health risk.
- The AQHI is calculated based on the risk posed by 3 indicator pollutants (ozone, particulate matter and nitrogen dioxide) which reflects the cumulative health impacts from multiple pollutants.
- The AQHI provides targeted health messages for the at-risk and general populations. Inform patients (especially at risk populations) about the AQHI and remind them to check the AQHI levels daily at: [www.airhealth.ca](http://www.airhealth.ca).
- In Peel Region, individuals can access AQHI readings for the City of Mississauga and Brampton. The AQHI reading for Caledon is taken from the monitoring station in Newmarket.
- Hourly updates as well as next day forecasts of the AQHI are provided, allowing the public time to modify activities.
- The AQHI is being used alongside the Ontario Ministry of the Environment's Air Quality Index (AQI). While the AQI is not based on health effects, it remains the index on which smog advisories are triggered.

Health Risk	Air Quality Health Index	Health Messages	
		At Risk Population*	General Population
Low Risk	1 - 3	<b>Enjoy</b> your usual outdoor activities.	<b>Ideal</b> air quality for outdoor activities.
Moderate Risk	4 - 6	<b>Consider reducing</b> or rescheduling strenuous activities outdoors if you are experiencing symptoms.	<b>No need to modify</b> your usual outdoor activities unless you experience symptoms such as coughing and throat irritation.
High Risk	7 - 10	<b>Reduce</b> or reschedule strenuous activities outdoors. Children and the elderly should also take it easy.	<b>Consider reducing</b> or rescheduling strenuous activities outdoors if you experience symptoms such as coughing and throat irritation.
Very High Risk	Above 10	<b>Avoid</b> strenuous activities outdoors. Children and the elderly should also avoid outdoor physical exertion.	<b>Reduce</b> or reschedule strenuous activities outdoors, especially if you experience symptoms such as coughing and throat irritation.