



Concerns About **ENVIRONMENTAL ODORS**

An odor is caused by a substance you can smell in the air. Bad odors don't always mean you're being exposed to harmful levels of chemicals. **In general, most substances that cause environmental odors in the air are not at levels that can harm your health; however, they can still be a nuisance and affect your quality of life.**

Our sense of smell is unique because everyone responds differently to odors. Odors that smell good or pleasant to one person may bother another person. On the other hand, some harmful chemicals may have either a mild odor or none at all, for example, carbon monoxide. Some people may even find some dangerous chemicals, like benzene, to have a pleasant odor.

Sources of Environmental Odors

Odors can come from human activities, animals, nature, vehicles, and industry. Common sources of odors include:

Industrial



- Landfills
- Industrial chemicals
- Paper mills
- Wood treatment plants

Non-industrial



- Sewage
- Confined animal feeding operations (CAFOs)
- Pesticides and fertilizer
- Diesel exhaust

Common Symptoms

Symptoms vary based on a person's sensitivity to an odor as well as other factors:

- What type of substance you're exposed to
- How much of a substance you are exposed to
- Frequency of exposure
- Length of exposure

Young children, elderly adults, pregnant women, and people with some medical conditions (asthma, COPD, and emphysema) tend to be more sensitive to odors.

The most common symptoms from environmental odors include:

- Headache
- Nausea
- Dizziness
- Watery, itchy, or burning eyes
- Irritated nose or throat
- Coughing or wheezing (especially if you have allergies, asthma, and other chronic lung problems)

If an odor lasts a long time or keeps occurring, it can also affect your mood as well as your anxiety and stress levels.

Reducing Exposure to Environmental Odors

You can reduce your exposure to environmental odors by:

- Closing windows and doors and reducing air intake into your home when odors are present.
- Exercising indoors during days when environmental odors are present.
- Staying indoors when your allergies, asthma, and chronic lung issues are active.
- Leaving the area for a few hours, if possible, while the odor is present.



Complete an odor diary to track useful information to help investigate or identify the source of the odor.

Available at www.dph.georgia.gov/chemical-hazards

Helpful Resources

Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry
www.atsdr.cdc.gov/odors/

Georgia Environmental Protection Division
www.epd.georgia.gov

For More Information

Georgia Department of Public Health
Environmental Health Section
Chemical Hazards Program
(404) 657-6534
www.dph.georgia.gov/chemical-hazards

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