

The **OUTSIDE** Page

How **CLEAN** is Your Air?

You can check the amount of particulate matter (dust) in the air around home with some simple items you probably already have.

- 👉 paper plates (one for each test site)
- 👉 petroleum jelly (e.g., Vaseline®)
- 👉 magnifying lens

Spread a very thin layer of petroleum jelly on the paper plates. Set the plates in the areas you want to test. Choose one indoor site, and several outdoor sites. You'll need to leave the plates there for a week. Choose your sites carefully so the plates won't blow away or be disturbed, and so they're sheltered from rain and snow. Use clothespins to hold them in place, if you need to. Using the magnifying lens, take a close look at each plate after two days. What's stuck in the petroleum jelly? Return each plate to the study site and look at them again after two more days. How do they compare with the first time you looked at them? Leave the plates for three days this time, so they are out for a total of one week. What do they look like now?



The dust on the plates fell there from the surrounding air. How clean is your air?

What's Your AQI?



The Air Quality Index (AQI) is a scoring system for outdoor air quality. Go to <http://airnow.gov/> and enter your zip code. The website will then provide you with a map and give the AQI for your area. Look for the overall score, from good (0 to 50) through hazardous (201 to 300). Look, too, for specific information about levels of ozone and particulates. Is it safe to be outside today? If not, what are the major pollutants? If the AQI is in a safe range, turn off your computer and head outdoors to enjoy yourself!

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