

Carbon Dioxide Encyclopedia Article

Carbon Dioxide

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Carbon Dioxide

The fourth most abundant gas in the earth's **atmosphere**, **carbon** dioxide occurs in an abundance of about 350 **parts per million**. The gas is released by volcanoes and during **respiration**, **combustion**, and decay. Plants convert carbon dioxide into carbohydrates by the process of **photosynthesis**. Carbon dioxide normally poses no health hazard to humans. An important factor in maintaining the earth's **climate**, molecules of carbon dioxide capture heat radiated from the earth's surface, raising the planet's temperature to a level at which life can be sustained, a phenomenon known as the **greenhouse effect**. Some scientists believe that increasing levels of carbon dioxide resulting from human activities are now contributing to a potentially dangerous global warming.