
Air Pollution, Smog and Children with Asthma

How does air pollution or smog affect asthma?

Pollutants in the air can irritate the airways causing asthma symptoms quite quickly. They can also cause inflammation in the airways which leads to asthma symptoms more slowly.

Why is summer air more of a problem?

In the summer, there are many pollutants in the air. These come from cars, trucks, lawnmowers, garden equipment, barbeques, wood fires, forest fires, lawn sprays and many more things.

Why are children at risk with air pollution?

Children breathe in more air than adults do because they are smaller and breathe more often. Children's lungs are also not fully developed and they often spend more time outside.

Children with asthma may take a few days to react to high smog levels. You should be aware of this so you can avoid problems.

How do I help my child during high smog days?

- Pay attention to smog alerts and weather reports on the radio and television. You can sometimes see a white or yellow haze in the sky on heavy smog days as well. If it is going to be a hot, hazy day, plan to stay inside and not do too much.
- Stay in air-conditioned spaces. Avoid going outside and exercising in the afternoons and early evenings. Your child may need to skip playing sports such as baseball and soccer.

How do I help my child during high smog days?

- Teach your child to breathe through the nose to help filter pollutants.
- Make sure your child has enough to drink during the day.
- Avoid taking children to high traffic areas such as a park close to the road.
- Keep asthma under control by using the correct medications as prescribed. Always carry the “Reliever medication” to use when needed.

How can I help reduce air pollution?

- Drive less, use public transportation, car pool or ride bikes.
- Maintain vehicles well.
- Reduce home energy use.
- Reduce use of small engines when gardening and working around the house.
- Buy “green” environmentally friendly products.
- Ask your friends and family to help control pollution also.

What do I do if my child’s asthma gets worse?

- Talk to your doctor or nurse educator before this happens to make an action plan.
- Contact your doctor or nurse educator if you are worried.