



Air Pollution and Seniors

Health and Air Quality Bulletin

If you are a senior, air pollution could have a negative impact on your health.

This is because seniors are more likely than other adults to have health problems such as heart and lung disease.

You can better protect yourself when you know that air pollution affects your health.



Negative health effects increase as air pollution worsens

Sources of Air Pollution

Sources of outdoor pollution include motor vehicles, industrial activity and thermoelectric power generation.

Effects on Your Health

Air pollution can:

- irritate your respiratory system, causing inflammation of the lungs;
- reduce your lung function, making it harder to breathe;
- aggravate asthma and Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD); and
- result in a hospital admission, increased medication use, or, in especially sensitive people, even death.

Air pollution includes ground-level ozone and fine airborne particles, as well as carbon monoxide, nitrogen oxides and sulphur oxides. This mix of substances is often called smog, which occurs usually during the summer.

Air pollution has no boundaries. You can be exposed in either urban or rural environments. And it also occurs in the winter.

Sources of indoor air pollution include second-hand tobacco smoke, chemicals from cleaning products, molds from humidity and wood-burning stoves.

Our mission is to help the people of Canada maintain and improve their health.

Health Canada



What You Can Do to Protect Yourself

- Listen to radio or television weather reports or read your local newspaper for information about air quality and media smog advisories.
- Plan your day based on this information, and reschedule strenuous activities if poor air quality is forecast. Arrange to have someone do necessary errands on smoggy days.
- An indoor environment filled with tobacco or wood smoke, or chemicals from cleaning products and molds from humidity, can also have a negative impact on your health.
- If you smoke, quit.
- Fix or arrange to have fixed poor ventilation, damp rooms and water leaks.
- Ensure proper ventilation and handling when cooking, cleaning or using chemical products.

Visit Health Canada's Health and Air Quality website at www.hc-sc.gc.ca/air or call 613-957-1876 to learn more about how air pollution affects you and what you can do to help reduce it.

- Consult your health care provider if you have concerns about the effects of air pollution on your health.

Air pollution levels are often high on hot summer days. This combination of heat and air pollution can be more dangerous than either air pollution or heat alone. Remember to drink lots of water unless advised otherwise by your physician.

Seniors Can Help Reduce Air Pollution

Seniors can play an important role in reducing air pollution by:

- Driving less
- Walking
- Using public transport where possible
- Car pooling

There are many other things you can do to reduce air pollution.

For information on how to control indoor air pollution, please contact the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation at www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca or 1-800-668-2642.