



Poor Outdoor Air Quality

Extreme heat events in Massachusetts can bring high levels of ozone, pollen, and particles in the air like dust, dirt, smoke, or liquid droplets (particulate matter) that are so small they can be inhaled and cause serious health problems. Poor outdoor air quality can cause health problems, especially in people with asthma, lung disease, or heart disease and can worsen asthma and allergy symptoms.

Extreme heat, more cloud cover, and humidity due to climate change is expected to increase air pollution in Massachusetts.



Who is at higher risk?

Some people may be more at risk because of where they live, their access to official government information, availability of resources to prepare and respond, and whether they already have health problems. These people include:

- Children under 5 and people over 65
- Pregnant people
- People with disabilities
- People with pre-existing medical conditions such as heart disease, asthma, lung disease and respiratory allergies
- People of color due to systemic racism
- People who speak little or no English, and who may not receive emergency messages in their native language
- People that live in areas with heavy traffic
- People that work or exercise outdoors

What can we do about it?

- Reduce common asthma triggers at home, such as secondhand smoke, dust, pet hair and dander, and mold
- Use portable air filters or air conditioning if you have it
- Maintain humidity levels between 30-50% indoors with air conditioners, fans, or dehumidifiers if you can
- Ask your doctor about how to recognize seasonal allergy symptoms and use appropriate medications
- Limit time outside on days with high pollution or high pollen counts
- Ask schools and camps to reduce children's exposure to common asthma triggers such as exposure to idling vehicles in pick-up and drop-off lines
- Be aware of the air quality around you - check your community's [Air Quality Index](#)
- Walk or bike or take public transportation when possible
- When using a car, do not idle your vehicle for any longer than necessary
- [Know the signs of dehydration and overheating](#)

Learn more at
mass.gov/ClimateAndHealth



Bureau of Climate and Environmental Health
Environmental Toxicology Program
Massachusetts Department of Public Health