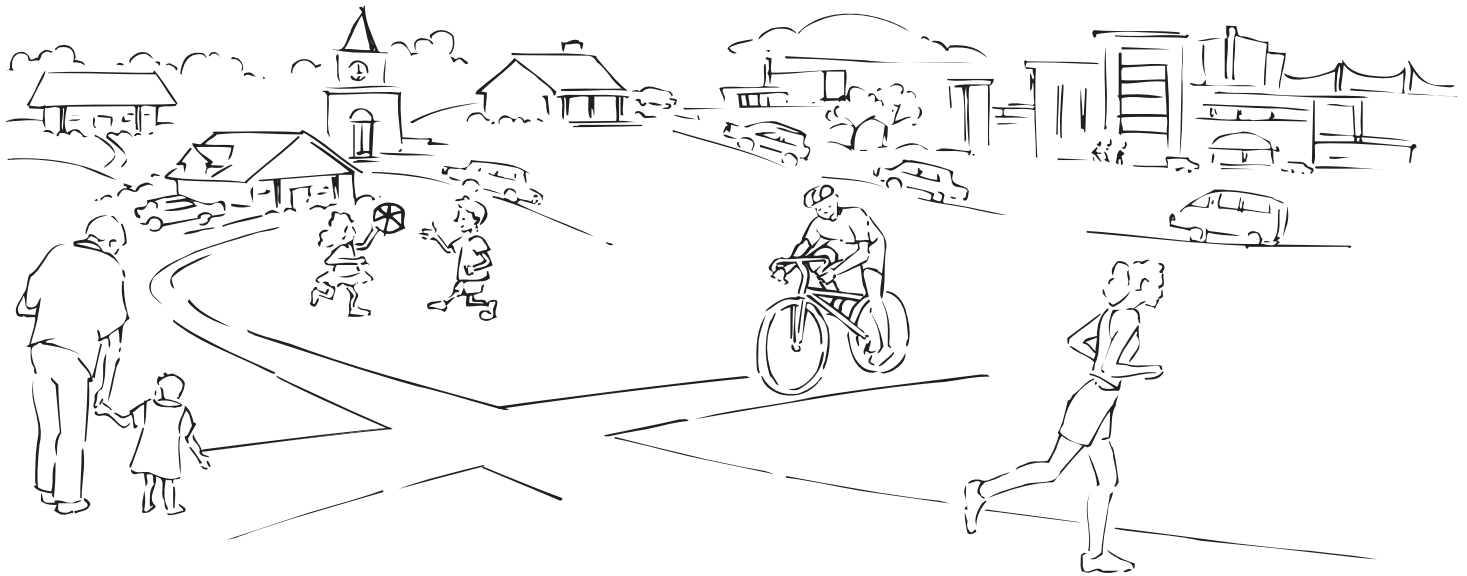


# ASTHMA AND OUTDOOR AIR POLLUTION



## 1 Air pollution can make asthma symptoms worse and trigger attacks.

If you or your child has asthma, have you ever noticed symptoms get worse when the air is polluted? Air pollution can make it harder to breathe. It can also cause other symptoms, like coughing, wheezing, chest discomfort, and a burning feeling in the lungs.

Two key air pollutants can affect asthma. One is *ozone* (found in smog). The other is *particle pollution* (found in haze, smoke, and dust). When ozone and particle pollution are in the air, adults and children with asthma are more likely to have symptoms.

## 2 You can take steps to help protect your health from air pollution.

### ► Get to know how sensitive you are to air pollution.

- Notice your asthma symptoms when you are physically active. Do they happen more often when the air is more polluted? If so, you may be sensitive to air pollution.

- Also notice any asthma symptoms that begin up to a day *after* you have been outdoors in polluted air. Air pollution can make you more sensitive to asthma triggers, like mold and dust mites. If you are more sensitive than usual to indoor asthma triggers, it could be due to air pollution outdoors.

### ► Know when and where air pollution may be bad.

- *Ozone* is often worst on hot summer days, especially in the afternoons and early evenings.
- *Particle pollution* can be bad any time of year, even in winter. It can be especially bad when the weather is calm, allowing air pollution to build up. Particle levels can also be high:
  - Near busy roads, during rush hour, and around factories.
  - When there is smoke in the air from wood stoves, fireplaces, or burning vegetation.

► **Plan activities when and where pollution levels are lower.** Regular exercise is important for staying healthy, especially for people with asthma. By adjusting when and where you exercise, you can lead a healthy lifestyle and help reduce your asthma symptoms when the air is polluted. In summer, plan your most vigorous activities for the morning. Try to exercise away from busy roads or industrial areas. On hot, smoggy days when ozone levels are high, think about exercising indoors.

► **Change your activity level.** When the air is polluted, try to take it easier if you are active outdoors. This will reduce how much pollution you breathe. Even if you can't change your schedule, you might be able to change your activity so it is less intense. For example, go for a walk instead of a jog. Or, spend less time on the activity. For example, jog for 20 minutes instead of 30.

► **Listen to your body.** If you get asthma symptoms when the air is polluted, stop your activity. Find another, less intense activity.

► **Keep your quick-relief medicine on hand when you're active outdoors.** That way, if you do have symptoms, you'll be prepared. This is especially important if you're starting a new activity that is more intense than you are used to.

► **Consult your health care provider.** If you have asthma symptoms when the air is polluted, talk with your health care provider.

- If you will be exercising more than usual, discuss this with your health care provider. Ask whether you should use medicine before you start outdoor activities.

- If you have symptoms during a certain type of activity, ask your health care provider if you should follow an asthma action plan.

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### 3 Get up-to-date information about your local air quality:

Sometimes you can tell that the air is polluted—for example, on a smoggy or hazy day. But often you can't. In many areas, you can find air quality forecasts and reports on local TV or radio. These reports use the Air Quality Index, or AQI, a simple color scale, to tell you how clean or polluted the air is. You can also find these reports on the Internet at: [www.epa.gov/airnow](http://www.epa.gov/airnow). You can use the AQI to plan your activities each day to help reduce your asthma symptoms.

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### 4 For more information:

#### **Air quality and health:**

- EPA's AIRNow website at [www.epa.gov/airnow](http://www.epa.gov/airnow)
- Call 1-800-490-9198 to request free EPA brochures on: *Ozone and Your Health*, *Particle Pollution and Your Health*, and *Air Quality Index: A Guide to Air Quality and Your Health*.

#### **Asthma:**

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Web site at [www.cdc.gov/asthma](http://www.cdc.gov/asthma)

#### **Indoor air and asthma:**

- EPA's asthma website at [www.epa.gov/asthma](http://www.epa.gov/asthma)



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