Humber and North Yorkshire
Health and Care Partnership

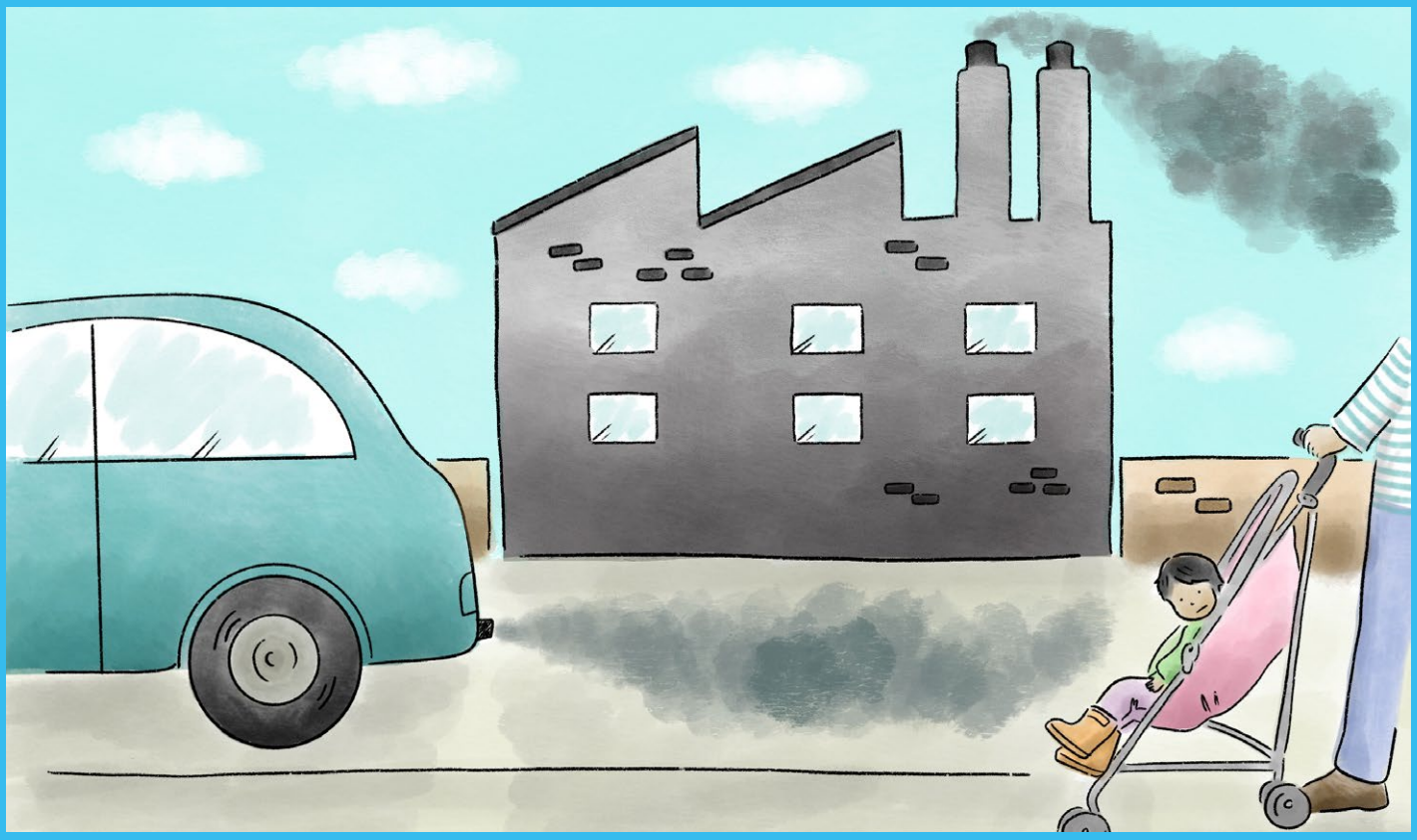
Air Pollution

Information for parents and carers

Key facts

Air pollution is generally invisible, it enters our lungs when we breathe and gets into our bloodstream, leading to affects throughout the body.

- There is no safe level of air pollution
- There are many causes inside and outside the home
- Children are especially sensitive because their bodies are still growing.
- Children's lungs, immune systems, brain and ability to learn are all impacted by air pollution.
- Air pollution can affect people in the town or countryside
- It is worse near main roads



V1 Approved Nov 22 Review Nov 24 Author: HYN ICB Asthma Taskforce

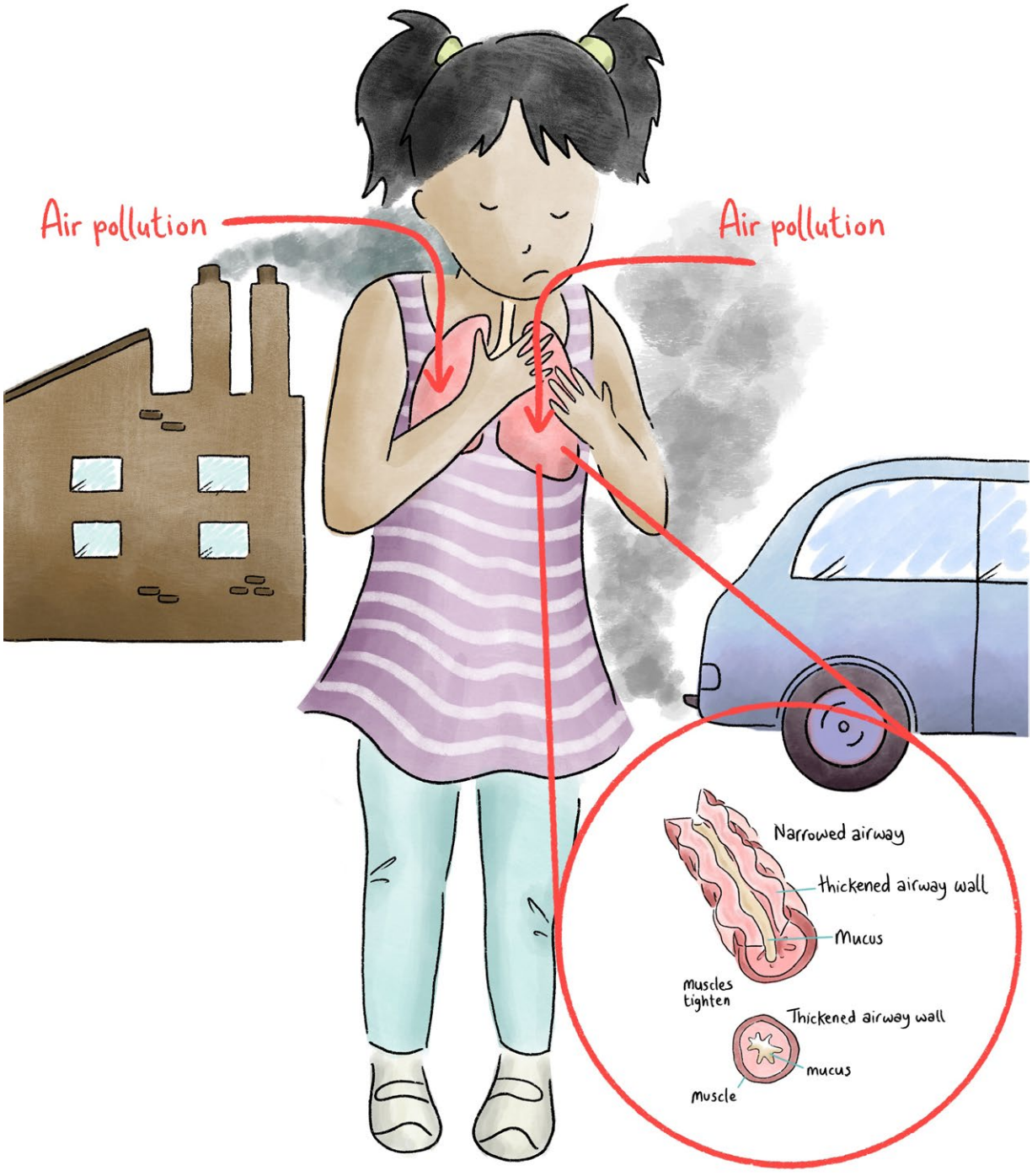
How does air pollution affect asthma?

Air pollution can affect your asthma in different ways.

You may find that air pollution can make your asthma worse, making it more likely for you to have an asthma attack.

Air pollution can also make you more sensitive to your triggers, such as pollen or exercise, making them more likely to cause an asthma attack.

There are long-term effects too; exposure to air pollution at a young age may contribute to the development of asthma in later childhood.

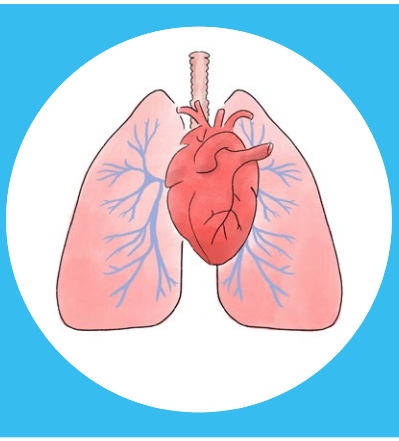


Air pollution levels

It's important to be aware of air pollution levels and know what to do if the levels are high. The **Daily Air Quality Index** tells you about levels of air pollution and provides recommended actions and health advice.

The index is numbered 1-10 and divided into four bands, low (1) to very high (10), to provide detail about air pollution levels in a simple way.

Your should follow these steps to use the Daily Air Quality Index



Step 1:

Determine whether you (or your children) are likely to be at risk from air pollution. Children with heart or lung problems are at greater risk of symptoms. It is possible that very sensitive individuals may experience health effects even on low pollution days.

Step 2:

If you may be at-risk and are planning strenuous activity outdoors, check the air pollution forecast

Step 3:

Use the health messages corresponding to the highest forecast level of pollution as a guide

Air Pollution Banding	Value	Accompanying health messages for at-risk individuals*	Accompanying health messages for the general population
 Low	1-3	Enjoy your usual outdoor activities.	Enjoy your usual outdoor activities.
 Moderate	4-6	Adults and children with lung problems, and adults with heart problems, who experience symptoms, should consider reducing strenuous physical activity, particularly outdoors.	Enjoy your usual outdoor activities.
 High	7-9	Adults and children with lung problems, and adults with heart problems, should reduce strenuous physical exertion, particularly outdoors, and particularly if they experience symptoms. People with asthma may find they need to use their reliever inhaler more often. Older people should also reduce physical exertion.	Anyone experiencing discomfort such as sore eyes, cough or sore throat should consider reducing activity, particularly outdoors.
 Very High	10	Adults and children with lung problems, adults with heart problems, and older people, should avoid strenuous physical activity. People with asthma may find they need to use their reliever inhaler more often.	Reduce physical exertion, particularly outdoors, especially if you experience symptoms such as cough or sore throat.

Outdoor air pollution

Make travel choices for cleaner air. Simple steps can have a big impact on the air your family breathes

Use people power

Walk, scoot or cycle to school as often as you can

Discover the side streets

use quieter streets when you're walking or on a bike to avoid the higher levels of air pollution on main roads.

Don't idle

If you have to drive, turn off the engine when you are not moving, and if it is safe to do so. Air quality can be worse inside the vehicle than outside. You could consider switching to an electric vehicle.

Indoor air quality

Why is indoor air quality important to your child's asthma?

If your child has asthma, they are more at risk from poor air quality indoors, especially if they spend a lot of time at home. Many common indoor pollutants are small enough to get into the lungs and make your child's asthma symptoms worse.

Activities that can make the air quality in our homes worse

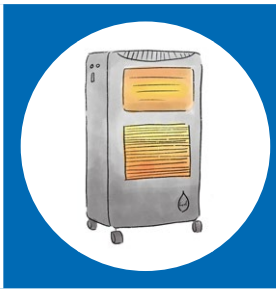
Smoking

Open solid-fuel fires

Cookers, especially gas cookers

Log burners

Candles



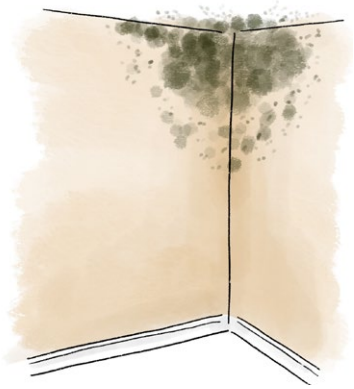
Free-standing gas heaters

Having a bath or shower

Cleaning products, household sprays, aerosols and paints

Air-drying clothes in the home

Mould and Damp



What is mould?

Mould is a type of fungus that grows in damp places. If you've got mould at home, you'll probably notice fuzzy black, white or green patches on walls, ceilings or tiles. It might smell damp and musty.

Mould is more common in homes that need repairs, such as fixing window frames, or sorting leaks out. You might notice it's more damp and mould in bathrooms or kitchens because of condensation from washing and cooking.

Why is damp a problem for asthma?

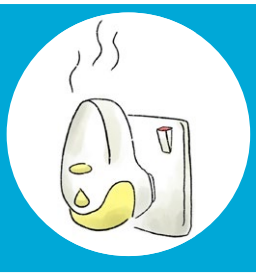
Living in a damp, mouldy home is not good for your asthma. Babies, small children, older people and people with allergies are more likely to be affected.

Mould produces spores which can be breathed in. If your child is allergic to mould spores it could trigger their asthma symptoms.

Damp and mouldy housing can put your child more at risk of other things that can make their asthma worse like chest infections, colds and flu and rhinitis.

How can you improve indoor air quality?

Use fragrance-free, milder cleaning products



Avoid plug-in fragrances

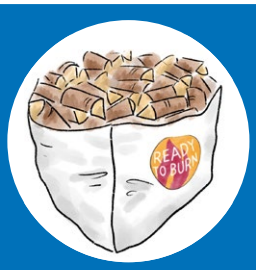
Avoid aerosols and sprays

When decorating, choose safer paints and varnishes labelled 'low VOC' (volatile organic compounds)

Ask people not to smoke in your home. Cigarette smoke is a dangerous asthma trigger and it can also make you and your child more sensitive to other indoor triggers. Your local stop smoking service is free and able to offer support to help you stop smoking.

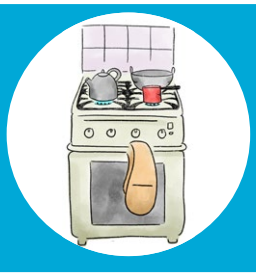
Help to stop smoking can be obtained from

- www.nhs.uk/smokefree
- Smokefree National Helpline (free): 0300 123 1044
- NHS Smokefree App (free)



Reduce home burning as much as possible (e.g. log burners, coal fires or candles) - open coal fires can give off sulphur dioxide which can trigger asthma. Try using wood with a 'ready to burn' symbol. Central heating tends to be cleaner, but can still give off some pollutants especially if its an old boiler or hasn't been serviced for a while.

Service heaters, cookers and boilers once a year – they will be checked to make sure they are not giving out too many fumes.



Avoid gas cookers – they give off fine particles small enough to get into your lungs. Good ventilation in the kitchen is even more important if you have a gas cooker.

Tips when cooking to prevent moisture and condensation build up.

- Open windows
- Use extractor fans - use the highest setting
- Place the pan at the back of the hob when you can, as this works best with the extractor fan.
- Let the fan run for 10 minutes after you finish cooking.

Ventilate your home

Open windows in bathrooms, when cooking, using cleaning products or using the bath or shower.

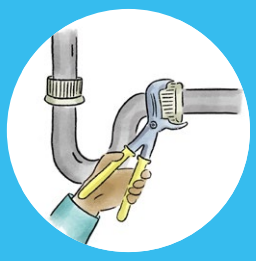
Some windows have small vents built into them known as ‘trickle vents’, which you can keep open.

Watch out for dusty fans or extractors or you’ll end up blowing dust all round the room.

Close windows near busy roads during busy times.

Remember to open windows in winter, when there are typically high levels of pollutants in your home because of using gas appliances and fires more.

Caution on high pollen or pollution days or very cold days, if these are triggers for your child’s asthma.

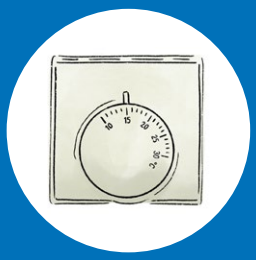


Housing repairs

It is important to repair any leaks, problems with mould or ventilation systems. If you are living in social housing contact your housing association or local authority. If you are in a private rental, Shelter have information about talking to your landlord.

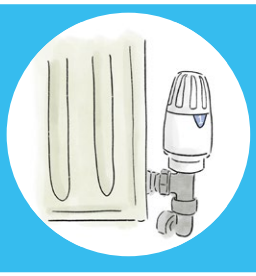
Avoid drying clothes indoors

If you have no where else to dry them, open a window nearby if you can.



Keep room temperature stable

It is good to keep a stable background temperature in the home so it does not get too cold – at least 15 degrees in all rooms. Very cold rooms are more likely to get damp and mould.



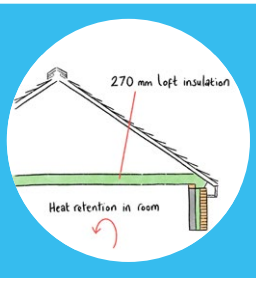
Set radiators with adjustable valves to 1 in unused rooms so the radiator gives out a little bit of heat, or use room heaters with a timer. This can be difficult when fuel costs are high.

Help with keeping your home warm

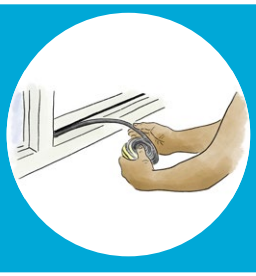
Citizens advice offer advice on grants and benefits to help you pay your energy bills, and also advice on switching energy suppliers. You may be able to access support from affordable warmth services in your local area, such as help repairing your boiler if you are on low income.

Insulate and draught-proof your home

Warm homes get less condensation.



Make sure your home is well insulated by insulating your loft by the recommended depth of 270mm, and your cavity walls, if your house has them.



Your windows and external doors should be draught-proofed, and you should consider secondary glazing in your windows are draughty.

What to do if you've got damp and mould at home?

If you think your home is damp, or you've noticed mould, it's best to act quickly to sort out the problem before it gets worse.

Deal with the damp:

Home Owners

Find out what's causing the damp, such as leaks, or condensation from cooking, showering or drying clothes indoors.

Mould removal specialist

Don't try and get rid of any mould by yourself if you have asthma that is triggered by mould. Get a mould removal specialist.

Builder

If the mould covers more than a square meter or if it's caused by problems with the building itself then you would need to get advice from a builder.

Rental property

- If you are a tenant and you have concerns about dampness or mould in your property, the first step is to report the issue to your landlord to give them the opportunity to put it right.
- If you are not satisfied with the outcome after doing this you should report it to your local council (if they are not your landlord) who can investigate any actions your landlord needs to take, which they can enforce if necessary.
- If you are a council tenant and not happy with the response from your landlord you should make a formal complaint through your council's customer feedback process. The Housing Ombudsman can assist after this if you do not receive a satisfactory response or outcome to your complaint.

Removing Mould

If you do not have a breathing condition triggered by mould then you can try to remove the mould yourself.

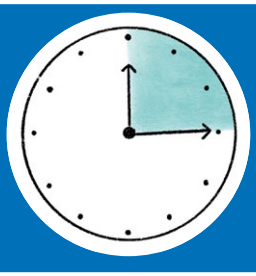
1 Before starting put on gloves, mask and goggles

2 Keep the room ventilated while you are cleaning. This helps to prevent you inhaling the mould spores and any toxic fumes that may be released by the cleaning solutions

3 Use a spray containing bleach to clean off the mould. This will help remove the staining that persistent mould can leave behind.

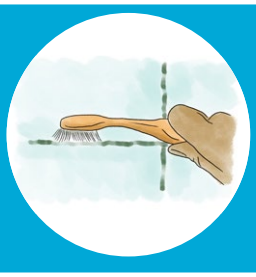
4 Leave to dry overnight

5 The following day, spray the affected area with an anti-fungal wash and allow that to dry.



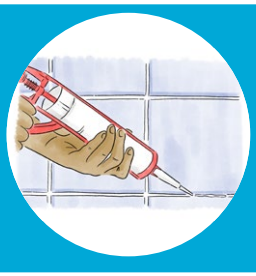
6 Allow to dry for 15 minutes

7 Scrub wall with a stiff brush



8 Scrub grout or caulking with a toothbrush.

If the mould builds up too much, you won't be able to scrub it away



9 Apply new grout or caulking and clean it regularly to prevent the mould forming more stains

10 Paint the room that has been affected with mould resistant paint

Always follow the manufacturers instructions