

Air pollution: outdoor air quality and health

Information for the public

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www.nice.org.uk

Air pollution can have a serious effect on health, particularly among people over 65 and children aged 14 and under. Long-term exposure can cause breathing problems such as asthma and other conditions, mainly affecting the heart and lungs. Cars and other motor vehicles are a major cause of air pollution. Some groups are more susceptible to short-term exposure, but long-term exposure causes the most health problems.

We want this guideline to help reduce air pollution and protect people from its effects by:

- Helping people understand how air pollution can affect their health and how they can protect themselves, for example, by not being too physically active when pollution levels are high if they are vulnerable to breathing difficulties.
- Helping people to be less reliant on their cars by giving them other options, such as reliable public transport and introducing more walking and cycling routes.
- Making it easier for people to drive in the most efficient, least polluting way by providing them with information and training.
- Making it easier for people and businesses to use electric cars and other vehicles that don't increase air pollution, such as bicycles.

Making decisions together

Decisions about healthcare, including how to protect yourself from air pollution, are best when they are made together. Your healthcare professional should give you clear information, talk with you about your options and listen carefully to your views and concerns.

If you can't understand the information you are given, tell your healthcare professional or worker.

Read more about [making decisions about your care](#).

News

['No idling' zones can help to protect vulnerable people from air pollution, says NICE](#)

National Clean Air Day

As part of Transport for Greater Manchester's support of National Clean Air Day, primary schools were tasked to create a radio or video advert about air pollution, its causes and what they and their families could do to protect themselves and the environment. See the video from [Gorse Hall Primary School](#).

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Where can I find out more?

[Public Health England](#) helped us develop the guideline and can give advice and support.

[NHS Choices](#) has some information about the effects of air pollution on health.

The organisations below can give you more advice and support.

- [Asthma UK](#), 0300 222 5800
- [Living Streets](#)
- [British Lung Foundation](#), 03000 030 555

NICE is not responsible for the content of these websites.

We wrote this guideline with people who have been affected by outdoor air pollution and a range of experts including those who specialise in air quality, energy, the environment and local planning. All the decisions are based on the best research available.

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