

## Public Health advice during times of poor air quality

The Department of Public Health urges people to take steps to reduce their exposure to air pollution and, where possible, to burn less solid fuel.

### Key points:

- While our air quality is generally good, at times air pollution levels can increase leading to poorer air quality in places.
- This can sometimes happen in cold and calm weather.
- When air quality is poor, you can reduce your exposure to air pollution by following the health advice below.
- You can help to improve air quality where you live by moving away from smoky fuels where possible, and instead using cleaner heat sources.

### Air pollution may increase in certain areas during cold calm weather

- In cold, calm weather, air pollution levels may increase.
- This is likely due to the increased burning of solid fuel, in combination with calm weather conditions that keep air pollution closer to the ground.
- Exposure to very high levels of air pollution can cause acute health problems – particularly if you have a heart condition or a lung condition such as asthma or chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD).

### Check the air quality in your area

- You can check the formal air quality readings in your area using the [EPA website](#). However, depending on how far your home is from the air quality monitor, keep in mind that the conditions at air quality monitors may not be the same as those around your immediate area.
- You may notice the air around you is visibly polluted, for example, you can see smoke lying low in the sky, which would indicate that the air quality is poor.
- When you are aware of an air quality issue, you can protect yourself by taking simple steps to reduce your exposure.

### Protect yourself and your family

- When air quality readings are poor:
  - Adults and children with lung problems, adults with heart problems, and older people should **reduce** strenuous physical activity, particularly outdoors, and particularly if they experience symptoms.
- When air quality readings are very poor:
  - Adults and children with lung problems, adults with heart problems, and older people should **avoid** strenuous physical activity, particularly outdoors.
- When air quality readings are poor or very poor, anyone in the population who experiences symptoms such as sore eyes, cough or sore throat could consider reducing activity, particularly outdoors.

### Heating your home

- It is important to keep warm in the winter and you can visit [hse.ie](#) for tips to help keep warm at home.
- Carefully consider how best to heat your homes. We can all play our part in reducing air pollution in our communities by moving away from smoky fuels where possible, and instead using cleaner heat sources.

### More information:

- Tips for keeping warm in winter: <https://www2.hse.ie/living-well/winter/keeping-warm-in-winter/>
- Air quality readings in your area: <https://airquality.ie/stations>
- Health advice based on air quality: <https://airquality.ie/information/air-quality-index-for-health>
- Improving air quality in our home heating choices: <https://www.epa.ie/environment-and-you/air/resources/airqualityhomeheatinginfographic-2022.php>
- The Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications: [gov.ie](https://gov.ie) - [Let's clear the air \(www.gov.ie\)](#)

