**Surviving Summer Smog**

Spending time outdoors during the hot summer months is a given, but for those who suffer from asthma and other lung diseases, air pollution can make it harder to breathe.

Air pollution, a mix of particles and gases like ozone, sulfur dioxide and carbon monoxide, can negatively affect your health and breathing. Some of the effects are minor, while others can be more severe.

Short term health effects include an increase in:

* asthma symptoms
* emergency department visits
* lung infections

Long term health effects include:

* Increased risk of asthma
* Increased risk of pneumonia
* Reduced lung function in children

Larger cities tend to have higher levels of pollution, but since wind can carry pollution long distances, there can be high levels in rural areas too.

Steps to stay healthy:

* Monitor the air quality health index (AQHI):
* Visit [www.airqualityontario.com](http://www.airqualityontario.com) or [www.airhealth.ca](http://www.airhealth.ca)
* Sign up for air quality alerts at [www.airqualityontario.com/alerts/signup.php](http://www.airqualityontario.com/alerts/signup.php)
* Recorded AQHI telephone messages: 1-800-387-7768 or 416-246-0411 in Toronto
* When pollution or allergens are at levels that affect you:
* Stay in a cool, clean setting
* Keep windows and doors closed in your home and car
* When needed, run your air conditioner and replace air filter when required
* Be active indoors in a cool clean setting
* Air pollution can build through the day in the hot summer sun, with the highest levels often in late afternoon during rush hours in high traffic areas
* Pollen levels tend to be highest on dry, sunny, windy days
* You can find pollen reports at The Weather Network
* Keep your asthma under control so air pollution will be less likely to affect you:
* Take asthma medications as prescribed
* If you start to have asthma symptoms, adjust your medication based on your asthma action plan
* If you don’t have an asthma action plan, see your health-care provider to get one
* Avoid your asthma triggers

If you have any questions about the air you breathe or your lung health, call The Lung Association Lung Health Information Line at 1-888-344-LUNG (5864) or visit on.lung.ca.