

How can I keep my lungs healthy?

Your lungs do amazing work every day. Healthy lungs supply large amounts of oxygen to your blood and allow you to work, play and live well. They also remove the carbon dioxide and other waste gases that your body doesn't need. There are many things you can do to keep your lungs healthy and disease-free:

1. **If you smoke, get help in quitting.** And if you're a non-smoker, don't start. Smoking is the major cause of serious lung diseases like lung cancer and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD). Smoke from cigarettes, cigars and pipes contains over 4,000 harmful chemicals – 50 of them are known to cause cancer. Even if you've been smoking for many years, it's never too late to quit and reap the health benefits of going smoke-free. Quitting smoking isn't easy, but there is a lot of help available.
2. **Avoid second-hand smoke.** Second-hand smoke is a complex mix of chemicals produced by burning tobacco. Just like primary smoking, second-hand smoke can cause disease and death. Two-thirds of the smoke from a cigarette isn't inhaled by the smoker, but enters the air around the smoker.

Here are some things you can do to avoid second-hand smoke:

- Don't allow smoking in your home, car or workplace.
 - Put up "no smoking" signs in your home, car and workplace.
 - Support businesses and activities that are smoke-free.
 - Make sure your children are not exposed to second-hand smoke at daycare or at friends' or relatives' houses.
3. **Wash your hands properly with regular soap and water.** It's estimated that hands spread 80 percent of common infectious respiratory diseases like colds and flu. You can reduce your risk of getting sick by learning how and when to wash your hands.
 - Teach your children proper handwashing procedures.
 - Post information on handwashing at work.
 - Avoid antibacterial soaps and cleaners – using these can lead to antibiotic resistance.
 - Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer when you don't have access to soap and water.

4. **Be aware of air pollution and do your part to keep the air clean.** Indoor and outdoor air pollution can cause health problems, especially for people who have lung diseases. Air pollution can irritate, inflame, or destroy lung tissue. Even low levels of air pollution can cause health problems. Children, seniors and people with chronic (long-term) diseases have a higher risk of getting sick from air pollution. Keep an eye on your local Air Quality Index – when outdoor air pollution is high stay indoors. There are many things you can do to keep the air clean indoors and out:

Outside

- Don't let your car engine idle and avoid open-air burning.
- Don't use pesticides and other chemicals on your lawn and garden.
- Use public transit.
- Support laws that aim to improve air quality.

Inside

- **Control moisture in your home:** For example, use exhaust fans in bathrooms and kitchens to vent moisture to the outside. Keep indoor humidity levels between 30% and 50% relative humidity.
- **Maintain home appliances:** Have major appliances such as furnaces, heat pumps and central air conditioners inspected and cleaned regularly by a professional.
- **Clean surfaces:** Keep moist surfaces such as bathtubs, shower stalls, and kitchen counters clean and dry.
- **Control dust** (especially if you're allergic to animal dander and mites): Dust mites thrive in mattresses, sofas, stuffed chairs and bedding. Always wash bedding in hot water (at least 54.5 °C or 130 °F) to kill dust mites. Keep carpets clean and dry.
- **Ventilate:** Make sure you're getting lots of fresh, clean air into your home. Open your windows when cleaning, painting, installing new carpet or doing other household projects.

5. **Protect yourself from lung health hazards at work.** People who work in certain jobs like construction and mining have a higher risk for lung diseases including lung cancer, asthma and COPD. If you spend a lot of time working around dust, asbestos, or chemicals wear protective clothing including a gas mask and ventilate work areas.