Heating and Cooling

Asthma Australia

Consumer Fact Sheet

When choosing heating and cooling for your home it is important to consider your triggers and individual experiences, to determine what heating and cooling options will best suit you.

Insulation is very important. This keeps a constant temperature throughout your home, keeping it cooler in the summer and warmer in the winter.

Remember correct use of preventer medications make the airways less sensitive, reduce redness and swelling and help to dry up mucus. Make sure you take your preventer medication every day as prescribed and have your device technique checked. Better asthma management and control can reduce the impact of heat and cold triggers.

Asthma Australia does not recommend one particular type of heating or cooling because everyone with asthma is different and therefore different types of heating may have varying effects on different individuals with asthma.

What should I consider when choosing a heating system?

- Wood fire heaters produce high levels of smoke and PM2.5 emissions which can be a trigger asthma
- Un-flued gas heating can release chemicals such as nitrogen dioxide which can be a trigger for asthma
- Fan forced ducted heating can collect dust, and if not cleaned, will circulate dust around the house which can be a trigger for asthma
- Electric heating methods (e.g. panel heaters, radiant heaters and hydronic heaters) may be better forms of heating for people with asthma as they don't emit or circulate smoke, gases or dust.

What should I consider when choosing a cooling system?

- If you have overhead fans, make sure you clean the dust off (or get someone to do this for you) before you turn them on, to prevent dust spreading
- Evaporative and refrigerated air conditioners can increase humidity levels, which may increase risk of mould or house dust mites
- Reverse cycle air conditioners may assist lowering indoor humidity
- Ensure filters of your air conditioning are regularly maintained and cleaned
- Asthma Australia is currently not aware of high quality evidence to suggest a beneficial effect on asthma symptoms from use of reverse cycle or refrigerated systems

My neighbour uses a wood fire heater which triggers my asthma, what can I do?

Wood smoke can be a trigger for people with asthma and can significantly impact health and quality of life. If your neighbour's wood smoke is triggering your asthma, talk to your neighbour respectfully as they may not be aware there is a problem. If you are not able to resolve the issue with your neighbour, you might benefit from speaking to your local council.

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Asthma Australia cannot offer individual case management services or act as representatives or advocates on behalf of individuals in these instances. However, we have identified this issue to be a priority area for our policy analysis and influence.

The EPA (Victoria) suggests some ways to reduce smoke from wood heaters are[i];

- Ensure your wood heater is installed by a licenced person
- Only purchase a wood heater which is certified to the Australian Standards
- Before winter, have your flue professionally checked and cleaned
- Burn only dry, unseasoned, un-treated wood
- Get a hot fire going quickly with plenty of paper and small kindling
- Never overload your wood heater with too much wood
- Never leave your heater to smoulder overnight, this starves the fire of oxygen, producing more smoke and pollution.

[i] Environment Protection Authority Victoria 2018, Tips to reduce smoke from your wood heater, Victorian Government.