



Indoor Air Quality and Maintaining Health During Winter

One thing you can say for wildfire smoke: it's conspicuous. There is no way to ignore sooty skies, air that you can taste and that prickling sensation at the back of your throat that warns you it's time to go indoors.

Indoor pollution, on the other hand, is more insidious. Once the winter months hit, staying cozy inside becomes a priority and unless you have a mushroom growing in your shower, it may not occur to you that airflow has slowed to a crawl. As a result, bacteria, environmental toxins, pet dander, mold and a mish-mash of other pollutants are slowly accumulating and guess what? You're inhaling them. According to the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), indoor air pollutants are among the top five environmental risks to public health.

The problem is that air, which moves freely throughout structures during warmer months, becomes trapped when the cold hits. Insulation and tight seals on windows and doors trap pollutants and allergens indoors. And remember that common saying that heat rises? That's bad news when it comes to air quality. In homes that use wood stoves, a process called temperature inversion can occur when warmer air rises above colder air at the ground level, acting as a seal that keeps in environmental toxins.

Sources of Indoor Air Pollution

Wood Stoves are not the only heating method that impacts air quality. HVAC systems can draw in fine particulate matter in the form of vehicle exhaust, construction waste and boilers. Other common sources of indoor air pollution are new furniture, paint and carpeting, pesticides, personal care products, emissions from gas-powered appliances such as washers and dryers, radon seeping up from the soil, stoves and ovens, glue and solvents, mold and mildew, household cleaning agents and disinfectants, dust particles from carpeting, air fresheners, tobacco and candles.

Health Impacts

The effects of indoor pollution range from mild to severe. Short-term impacts include irritation of the eyes, nose and throat, blocked sinuses or a runny nose, headaches, drowsiness, skin rashes, dizziness and difficulty breathing. Gas space heaters, furnaces and water heaters can leak carbon monoxide. Over 50,000 people visit the emergency room every year for carbon monoxide poisoning with symptoms of headache, dizziness, weakness, upset stomach, vomiting, chest pain and confusion. Breathing in large amounts of carbon monoxide causes people to pass out or even die.



Other sources may be harder to spot. Radon, which typically lives in cellars and basements but can also exist on the ground floor, is the second leading cause of lung cancer after smoking. Indoor pollutants like dust mites, mold, pet dander and other particulates trigger asthma attacks which can be fatal when they are recurrent, particularly in children. Chronic exposure to indoor toxins has been linked to respiratory diseases, heart disease and cancer.

Ways to Improve Indoor Air Quality in Winter

- Open some windows. Take advantage of occasional warmer days to increase airflow through your home, even if it's just for an hour or two.
- Clean. Keeping surfaces free of dust and sweeping or vacuuming regularly will get rid of pet dander and dust mites.
- Replace air filters. Past a certain point, air filters start circulating particulate matter rather than trapping it. Make sure to change your filters regularly.
- Get an air purifier. The technology behind air purifiers has continued to improve and you can now find affordable models that can last with the same filter for more than a year. Not only will a purifier reduce allergens such as pollen and mold spores, but it will also protect against wildfire smoke, an increasingly relevant issue in recent years.
- Pay attention to damp areas such as showers, sinks and basements to keep them clean and mold-free.
- Make sure you run any gas-powered appliances like generators next to an open doorway. If you're warming up your car in the garage, open the garage door first.
- Shop for environmentally friendly cleaning products. If they're better for the planet, they're better for you, too.
- Choose hard flooring over carpeting. If you already have carpeting, practice regular deep cleaning, especially before winter.
- Check your air ducts to ensure they are free of debris.
- Regularly wash bedding to get rid of dust mites.

Cleaning Up Your Internal Environment

Taking care of the external causes of indoor air pollution is essential, but it's equally important to address the effects on your health. If you've been living with pollutants for a while, you've breathed them in and now they are living within your cells. Zeolite as a form of ortho-silicic acid is one way to safely and effectively get rid of them.



Zeolite is so good at cleaning up toxic messes that government agencies worldwide use it to clear up nuclear waste and contaminated sites. Within the human body, it acts as a magnet for heavy metals and other toxins, capturing them within its honeycomb-shaped structure and making them large enough to pass out of the body through feces or urine. To learn more about how this works, read [Why the Structure of Soluble Zeolite is so Effective at Removing Toxins.](#)

Cleaning up both your internal and external environments should make lounging inside during winter much more enjoyable.

Sources

[“The Health Impacts of Indoor Air Quality”](#) by Camille Bridger, National Environmental Education Foundation, Accessed January 12, 2022

[“Winter Makes Indoor Air Quality Worse”](#) Franciscan Health January 22, 2019

[“Indoor Air Quality During Winter: Tips for Your Health and Home”](#) by Ed Grabianowski, Molekule, January 17, 2019