



Air Pollution and Children's Health

Children's health remains at risk from air pollution in much of the nation, a finding reported in the American Lung Association's 19th Annual "[State of the Air](#)" released just last month. The 2018 report found that more than 31.3 million children and teenagers lived in counties where the air quality earned at least one "F". To learn about the air quality where you live, visit stateoftheair.org, and type in your zip code.

While air pollution can harm anyone's health, children are especially vulnerable. Children face special risks from air pollution because their lungs are growing and because they are so active and breathe in a great deal of air. Just like the arms and legs, the largest portion of a child's lungs will grow long after he or she is born. Eighty percent of their tiny air sacs develop after birth and continue to grow until they become adults. Children often spend more time outdoors and are more active outdoors than most adults. That means they inhale more polluted air than adults do.

Since their bodies' defenses are still developing, children also face greater risk of infection from air pollution. Children with asthma are especially at risk from breathing air pollution, since it can trigger asthma symptoms.

Growing up breathing harmful levels of air pollution may cause developmental harm and put children at greater risk of developing lung disease as they age. In fact, air pollution affects children before they are even born. Several studies have found air pollution is linked to harm to children while they are still in the womb - specifically links between particle pollution, pre-term birth and low birthweight. For more information about how air pollution impacts children's health, [visit the Lung Association's website](#).

The good news is – cleaning up air pollution can reduce health risks to children. Studies have shown that children growing up in areas with cleaner air had much greater lung function, a benefit that will help them throughout their lives.

Thanks to the Clean Air Act, air quality in the United States has improved dramatically. But this year's "[State of the Air](#)" report demonstrated that climate change is making it harder to clean up pollution in our air. Climate change puts lungs at risk from worsened ozone pollution during heat waves and increased particle pollution from wildfires.

Furthermore, some in Congress and the Trump Administration have taken many steps to roll back or create loopholes in many of the protections in place under the Clean Air Act. For more information, here are [six key threats to our nation's air quality](#).

All children deserve to breathe healthy air. In order to ensure clean air for all Americans, the Clean Air Act must be fully implemented. To learn more about how you can protect clean air for kids, [click here](#).

In case you were wondering about the air quality where grandma lives: To learn how air quality in your hometown compares to another city, the "State of the Air" report has a handy "[Compare Your Air](#)" tool. One American Lung Association [volunteer](#) found this tool helpful as she looked at cities with cleaner air to relocate her family, because she wanted to protect her three children with asthma.