

# Lung Irritants

## Why it's important to avoid irritants

Irritants such as dust, chemicals and smoke can trigger coughing, wheezing or an increase in sputum, making it more difficult to breathe. It is also important to avoid anything to which you are allergic, such as pollens, cat fur or certain foods.

Your symptoms should only become worse for a short period of time when you are exposed to these triggers. If you cannot avoid them, you can use your short-acting bronchodilator 20-30 minutes before you are exposed.

## Some suggestions:

### Indoor Air Pollution:

- Keep your home dust- and smoke-free
- Change your furnace filter often (such as every three months)
- Consider installing an air filtration system
- Avoid using strong smelling cleaners, perfumes or deodorants

### Outdoor Air Pollution:

Pay attention to the Air Quality Health Index (AQHI) which measures several different pollutants that can irritate your lungs.

- The index gives suggestions on how to adjust your activity levels.
- See **[www.airqualityontario.com](http://www.airqualityontario.com)** for the forecast in your area.

### Moisture:

Maintain a comfortable level of humidity in your home (30-50%).

#### Too little moisture:

- Dries the protective mucus in your nose and lungs, making them dry, thick and hard to move
- Consider using a humidifier

#### Too much moisture:

- Makes breathing more difficult
- Can encourage the growth of mould in the home
- Consider using a dehumidifier or air-conditioning

### Weather:

- If possible, change your schedule to avoid going out in extreme heat, cold, windy or damp weather.
- Exercise indoors in a climate controlled room when the weather is poor.
- In cold weather, use a scarf or mask around your nose and mouth, to warm the air you are breathing.