

Home air pollution risks to look out for

- **Condensation and humidity**
- **Black Mould and damp**
- **Burning wood, open fires, candles or incense indoors**
- **Carbon Monoxide**
- **Dust mites**
- **Household chemicals**
- **Cooking smoke**
- **Poor ventilation**

If there is more than one risk present, the effects combine to make things worse. Be practical. Do what you can, not everything will be possible.

Condensation and humidity cause damp and black mould. The best way to suppress dangerous black mould is by stopping damp. Dampness is caused by buildup of condensation and humidity from everyday cooking, boiling kettles, showering or bathing without ventilation.

Black mould is caused by damp and can cause very serious health problems. People with allergies are most at risk, as are people who are immunocompromised or living with COPD. They can get seriously ill from exposure to black mould. This has led to fatalities.

Burning anything indoors causes very high levels of indoor air pollution. **That includes**

cooking, open fires, wood stoves, burning candles or incense. This can be obvious or invisible. The smoke particles irritate the airways or pass into the blood and organs throughout the body. This causes inflammation and contributes CVD, COPD, lung cancer, and many other serious illnesses.

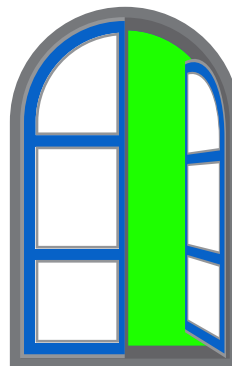
Carbon monoxide is a very toxic, odourless gas that stops the blood absorbing oxygen. High exposure causes death, with victims falling unconscious. Poorly maintained gas cookers and heaters, and badly ventilated open fires are the usual causes. Homes should have a carbon monoxide monitor with BS Kitemark or EN 50291, ideally a digital monitor that shows numbers.

Dust mites and their faeces are strong allergens. They can greatly worsen asthma and are thought to contribute to 90% of asthma cases.

Household chemicals, like cleaning sprays and scent diffusers can trigger illnesses. Use with care and ventilation, and avoid scent diffusers.

Cooking smoke, especially gas cooking, causes several kinds of indoor air pollution. Always cook with windows open and use an extractor fan if there is one.

Poor ventilation encourages damp, dust mites and air pollutants. Open safe windows and ventilate whenever possible.



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How to help protect vulnerable people from home air pollutants



A checklist for carers

Checklist for carers and home visitors



Reduce damp and condensation

Damp is caused by condensation and humidity. Reduce these by cooking and showering with extractor fans on and windows open when safe to do so. Cook and boil water with lids on. Dry clothes in well ventilated rooms or outdoors. Wipe off condensation on walls and windows. If condensation is present often and there are no simpler solutions, recommend using a humidity monitor and a dehumidifier as a temporary fix.



Look for black mould caused by dampness

Wipe down windows and wall condensation. Cook with lids on and ventilate while cooking and advise those you care for to do the same. Use showers with door closed, windows open if safe, and extractor fans on. Advise those you care for of Awaab's Law that requires landlords to resolve black mould.



Check for symptoms of carbon monoxide exposure

The main symptoms are dizziness, nausea and persistent headaches. If present **get immediate medical help**. If there's a carbon monoxide alarm, check if the levels are elevated or 10ppm or higher. If there's no alarm, recommend

installing a digital alarm that shows levels. Ensure fuel-burning appliances are checked regularly, including boilers, gas cookers, wood stoves and open fires.



Avoid burning in the home

Discourage burning candles, incense, wood stoves or open fires, especially near anyone with breathing issues. If possible avoid using them entirely, as they make smoke that can cause serious illnesses.



Always cook with ventilation

Always cook or boil water with ventilation, using cooker hoods and keeping lids on saucepans. Open windows if safe. Cook and shower with open windows, cooker hoods and exhaust fans on.



Keep dust mites down

Change bedding frequently, hot tumble dry linens or wash at 60C. Use allergen barriers on pillows, mattresses and duvets that suppress dust mites. Keep humidity down by airing bedrooms, beds and bedding when not in use. Leave bedding turned down to air the mattress. Vacuum carpets, especially with pets in the home.



Stop dust building up

Dust mites live in dust. Keep dust down with regular vacuuming especially of carpets and when there are pets in the home. Ideally use HEPA filters in the vacuum cleaner. Dust with a damp cloth.



Keep the air fresh

Ensure rooms and the whole home are aired regularly. Open doors and windows when safe to do so, while avoiding making the home cold.



Use household chemicals with care

Cleaning sprays, air fresheners, and diffusers can release chemicals that irritate the lungs, especially in people with asthma or allergies. Use with care and ventilation, avoiding diffusers. Store chemicals carefully and ensure that the containers are closed properly.

