

Healthy Lungs During Flu Season and High Pollution Days

The winter months bring special challenges to people with lung disease. Pollution tends to be higher and there are more respiratory infections, including influenza, a major cause of hospitalizations and death.

During the winter months, and during high pollution days during the summer months when dust levels are very high, you need to take steps to protect yourself. These include:

1. Make sure your flu shot and pneumonia shots are up to date
2. Make sure others in your household get their flu shots also
3. Stay away from people with respiratory infections
4. Avoid crowded areas such as restaurants
5. Stay indoors on high pollution or high dust days
6. Wash your hands frequently
7. Follow your daily care plan which includes taking your medicines and letting your doctor know if you are not feeling well early

Reasons to call your doctor include:

- Increased shortness of breath
- Fever
- Increased use of your inhaler or nebulizer
- Sinus pain or pressure/nasal congestion, earache, sore throat
- Increased cough
- Change in color of sputum with or without fever
- Increased wheezing

Your doctor may want to see you, change your medicines or add medicines to get you better and keep you out of the hospital. An Urgent Care center which can be a suitable alternative to an emergency room may be recommended if you need services beyond what the office can offer.