

Understanding Air Quality & Why It Matters



What Is Air Quality?

Air quality measures how much pollution is in the air we breathe. Common pollutants include: particulate matter (PM), nitrogen oxides, ozone, sulfur oxides, carbon monoxide, and lead.

Common Sources of Air Pollution

Indoor air pollution can come from:

- Tobacco smoke
- Fireplaces & wood stoves
- Mold, dust, & pet dander
- Cleaning products & chemicals
- Gas appliances
- Paints, aerosols, & sprays

Outdoor air pollution can come from:

- Passenger vehicles
- Diesel trucks
- Construction & farming
- Restaurants & industrial facilities
- Trains, airplanes, & shipping
- Wildfires, dust storms, & other natural sources

Why Does Air Quality Matter?

Some groups of people are at greater risk from air pollution because they are exposed to it more often, like those living near factories or busy highways. They may also be more affected if they have limited access to healthcare, poor nutrition, or pre-existing health problems. Air quality directly impacts our health and how well we live. Breathing polluted air can cause heart and lung problems. In the short term, it may lead to coughing or wheezing. Over time, it can raise the chances of developing conditions like asthma or lung infections.

Air Quality in Greater Cincinnati Key Facts

- Cincinnati ranks as the 14th worst U.S. city for year-round particle pollution according to the 2025 American Lung Association State of the Air Report.
- Cincinnati ranks 40th worst nationally for ozone pollution, averaging 6.7 unhealthy air days per year.
- Cincinnati also ranks 40th worst nationally for short-term particle pollution, averaging 4.7 unhealthy air days per year.

How Is Air Quality Measured?

Air quality is measured by the Air Quality Index (AQI), which tracks six main air pollutants. The AQI rates air from "good" to "hazardous," but what counts as "good" can differ between countries.

Stay informed with local air quality updates: [Cincy Air Watch](#) and [AirNow.gov](#)

Ways You Can Help Improve Air Quality

At Home

- Avoid unnecessary burning (candles, fireplaces, tobacco)
- Use safer cleaning and personal care products
- Reduce mold and excess moisture
- Choose electric appliances and tools

In Your Community

- Drive less when possible
- Support cleaner transportation options
- Reduce idling and energy waste
- Seal or remove hazardous materials when possible