

# TAB Monthly Newsletter

A Newsletter for people living with COPD to help us connect with our peers

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## HELLO SUMMER!!



### ***How Summer Affects Your COPD***

Summer can be a tricky time of year if you suffer from COPD or any respiratory disease for that matter. There are a number of different seasonal factors that can significantly impact your COPD ranging from extreme temperatures to poor air quality.

### ***Pay Attention to Weather Reports***

Generally speaking, anything above 90 degrees Fahrenheit is considered extreme heat, however, these are just recommendations for you to use. Heat may affect you differently than it may affect someone else with COPD. With that being said it's important for you to listen to what your body is trying to tell you. If you notice when the temp is above 80 that your symptoms worsen, use the 80-degree mark as your threshold instead of the 90-degree threshold. If you have errands to run or things to do outside and you know it's going to be a scorcher, plan to do those things earlier in the day between 8:00 am and 11:00 am or later in the day after 4:00 pm. By scheduling your plans around the heat of the day you will notice fatigue doesn't set in as quickly and you will have more energy to last you throughout the day.

With the summer heat and humidity comes higher levels of smog and higher levels of allergens in the air. This is especially true if you live in urban areas with a lot of automobile traffic. While allergens only affect people who suffer from allergies, smog and pollution affect everyone with COPD. In fact, environmental pollution is one of the leading causes of COPD in non-smokers.

<https://www.1stclassmed.com/blog/living-a-high-quality-life-this-summer-with-copd>

## SUMMER COPD TRIGGERS

Oh, there are so many things you can do in the summer. You can sit on your front porch while enjoying a cool drink and a refreshing breeze. You can bask in the sun while watching kids playing in cool, refreshing water. You can camp with your family and cook on the grill. Still, while summer can be the greatest season of the year, it also brings about COPD triggers that we must be leery of.

**CAMPFIRE & COOKING SMOKE:** So you love to spend time with your friends and family while enjoying all the pleasures of camping. You love to cook hotdogs and hamburgers (or steaks) on the grill. Evidence suggests, and studies have shown, that both the smell and particles inside heating and cooking smoke may trigger a flare-up of COPD. It may be best to cook on a traditional stove, and to avoid camping.

**HEAT AND HUMIDITY:** Hot summer days may be ideal for lounging around a beach or outdoor pool. However, temperatures greater than 90 degrees, and humidity greater than 50% may also make breathing difficult. Humid air tends to be thick with moisture and hard to breathe. A better idea may be to sit inside an air conditioned room watching a movie.

**INDOOR MOLD:** Mold can grow anywhere where moisture exists. Weather conditions may contribute to moisture inside your home. This may result from high humidity or water leaks after large rainfalls. Mold itself is harmless, although mold spores may be inhaled and irritate sensitive airways. Air conditioners and dehumidifiers work great for controlling indoor humidity. Be sure to prevent leaks into your home, and clean up any leaks immediately when they do occur.

**MOWING LAWNS:** The smell of grass, especially freshly mowed grass, may trigger a flare-up. Riding over grassless areas may cause a cloud of dust that may be inhaled, also triggering flare-ups. The best solution is to avoid mowing the lawn yourself, and to stay inside when your grass is being cut. It may also be a good idea to stay inside while your neighbor's grass is being mowed.

**POLLEN:** Many people with COPD also have allergies to pollen. Tree pollen may still be in the air in early June, although June is usually considered grass pollen month. July may provide some relief from pollen, but once ragweed season begins in August, pollen counts start to increase again. The best way to prevent pollen from irritating airways is to monitor pollen counts in your area and stay indoors with the windows shut when levels are high. Go to <https://www.theweathernetwork.com/ca/forecasts/pollen/ontario/hamilton> and [airhealth.ca](http://airhealth.ca)

**DEHYDRATION:** Another thing to pay attention to, especially when you have a lung disease, is how hydrated you are on hot summer days. Dehydrated lungs make airways increasingly irritable and prone to spasm. The best way to prevent a flare-up due to dehydration is to drink plenty of water, especially on hot days.

**OZONE:** This is a form of air pollution caused by emissions from factories, outdoor grills, and car exhaust. Ozone levels may be higher during hot, sunny days. Inhaling ozone may worsen airway inflammation. You can't see ozone, but you can monitor it by learning the Air Quality Index in your area. Limit outdoor exposure when levels are high. <https://www.theweathernetwork.com/ca/forecasts/air-quality/ontario/hamilton> and [airhealth.ca](http://airhealth.ca)

**PARTICULATE MATTER:** It's another form of air pollution caused by particles in the air due to smoke, dust, haze, emissions from factories, sea spray, and volcanoes. Inhaling these particles may irritate sensitive airways. Stay inside when you suspect smoke or dust to be in the outdoor air. Monitor the air quality and stay indoors if levels are high. <https://www.theweathernetwork.com/ca/forecasts/air-quality/ontario/hamilton> and [airhealth.ca](http://airhealth.ca)

**THUNDERSTORMS:** Studies showed an increase in emergency room visits among asthmatics following thunderstorms. Experts think this may be because rain causes pollen to rupture, causing minute particles that can be inhaled. It may also be due to rising humidity, or simply the pressure changes. Due to similarities between asthma and COPD, we can probably assume that thunderstorms may also be a COPD trigger.

**EVEN YOUR OWN AMBITION** may pose as a COPD trigger. A simple walk in the park may go too long; a canoe trip may expose you to too much environment, a picnic may expose you to smoke from a cooking grill. It's important to have fun, just be sure to plan the day so you aren't exposed to your COPD triggers. Also be sure to follow your Action Plan <http://copdcanada.ca/COPD%20Action%20Plan.htm> and pace yourself so you can enjoy all the summer fun. <https://www.healthcentral.com/article/10-summer-copd-triggers>

"When you can't breathe, nothing else matters"

Canadian Lung Association

The Take a Breath (TAB) Social Support Group — [tabmonthlynewsletter@gmail.com](mailto:tabmonthlynewsletter@gmail.com)