

Air quality and wellbeing: **guidebook for seniors**

This is what you
can do to follow
the air quality and
protect your health.



Image: City of Helsinki. Photographer: Katja Tähjä.

Do you know what kind of air you are breathing?



Image: City of Helsinki. Photographer: Roni Rekoma.

Air quality changes often.
It changes during the day and
depending on where you are.

In the Helsinki Metropolitan Area,
air quality is usually good.

Air quality may become poor if there
is a lot of the following in the air

- **street dust**
- **traffic exhaust fumes**
- **smoke from wood burning.**



Air quality is usually worst in areas with
heavy traffic. Air quality is often poor in
the spring because there is a lot of street
dust in the air.



There is often lots of dust
near construction sites.



Air quality may be poor in areas with
detached houses if people burn wood,
especially if the weather is freezing
and there is no wind.



Air quality sometimes gets worse when
air pollutants enter Finland from other
countries. Such air pollutants include
smoke from wildfires.

Poor air quality causes health hazards



Poor air quality can cause symptoms especially for the elderly and people with respiratory and heart diseases.

Typical symptoms include

- **runny nose and cough**
- **itching of the eyes and throat**
- **shortness of breath especially in people with respiratory and heart diseases.**



Pollen and freezing temperatures can make the symptoms worse.

How to protect yourself against poor air quality

- Spend time outdoors away from busy streets. The air is cleaner and noise from traffic is reduced even just one block from a busy street.
- Spend time outdoors in parks, forests or by the sea. Air quality is usually better in places like these.
- Do not open your windows at home when air quality is poor. If your home is too hot, open your windows at night. Opening windows is particularly important if you have a long-term illness or your general health is poor. Spending time in hot temperatures is worse for your health than poor air quality.



- If you have symptoms, look after yourself and take your medicines.
- Talk to your doctor if you have heart or breathing problems and think the symptoms may be getting worse. You can also talk to your doctor about using a face mask (FFP2 respirator). This may help some people, but will not be suitable for everyone.
- Replace supply air filters in your home in the spring and autumn.



Check the daily air quality.

You can check air quality:

- online at hsy.fi/airquality
- on Yle teletext page 424 (in Finnish)
- on information screens in City of Helsinki premises and in the metro and on trams
- on weekday mornings during the street dust season
 - TV: YLE TV1 Morning broadcast (in Finnish)
 - radio: Radio Helsinki and Ylen aikainen (in Finnish)

Read more about air quality

on the following websites:

- What to do when air quality gets worse:
hsy.fi/instructionsforactions
- Health effects of air pollutants:
hsy.fi/healtheffects
- Helsinki's Air Quality and Noise Abatement Plan 2024-2029:
hel.fi/ilme

Patient organisations provide their members with health guidance.