



Respiratory Care WA

Asthma | COPD | Respiratory Health



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respiratorycarewa.org.au

Heating and Cooling

This fact sheet provides information on appropriate heating and cooling appliances for people with asthma.

Heating

- **Oil Heaters:** Safe and reliable. Drying of the air may be a problem and a bowl of water left in the room will help.
- **Electric Non-Fans:** Appropriate e.g. slab heating, hot water. Heaters: convection (hydronic), wall panels.
- **Kerosene Heaters:** Give off a colourless and odourless gas (nitrogen dioxide) that can trigger asthma.
- **Wood Fires:** Depends on the type of wood burnt (be careful of wood that is treated with toxic varnishes which when burnt may trigger asthma in some people). Carbon dioxide, nitrogen dioxide and sulphur dioxide are also released.
- **Gas Heaters:** Unflued gas heaters can be unsafe as gas can be a trigger for people with asthma and it has been associated with other respiratory conditions. It is essential to have very good ventilation. Flued gas heaters are a safer option as this decreases the amount of gas particles in the room. Gas heaters dry the air and many are fan forced which stir up dust that has settled in the vents. Ducted gas is a new form of heating that is very safe as it ensures gas particles are not emitted into the room.
- **Fan Forced Heaters:** Often stir up dust and consequently dust mites that may be a trigger rather than the actual heater.



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Cooling

The different types of air conditioning may affect people with asthma in different ways depending on what triggers asthma in each individual. Some of the factors to be taken into account when deciding on a cooling system are:

Evaporative

Advantages:

- Moist air helps some people to breathe
- Doesn't run too cold
- Can be used as an exhaust fan to remove fumes
- Economical to run

Disadvantages:

- Moist air may trigger asthma symptoms in some people
- Older models have drip trays that can increase mould growth – filters need regular cleaning
- Higher humidity in the home means ideal conditions for house dust mite and mould growth
- Need to allow for ventilation – leave windows open 10cm, so cannot shut out air-borne pollens

Refrigerated

Advantages:

- Dry air helps some people to breathe
- Some come with variable control temperature
- Can shut out air-borne pollens
- Hostile conditions for house dust mites and moulds

Disadvantages:

- Cold, dry air may trigger asthma symptoms in some people
- Cannot be used as an exhaust
- Expensive to run