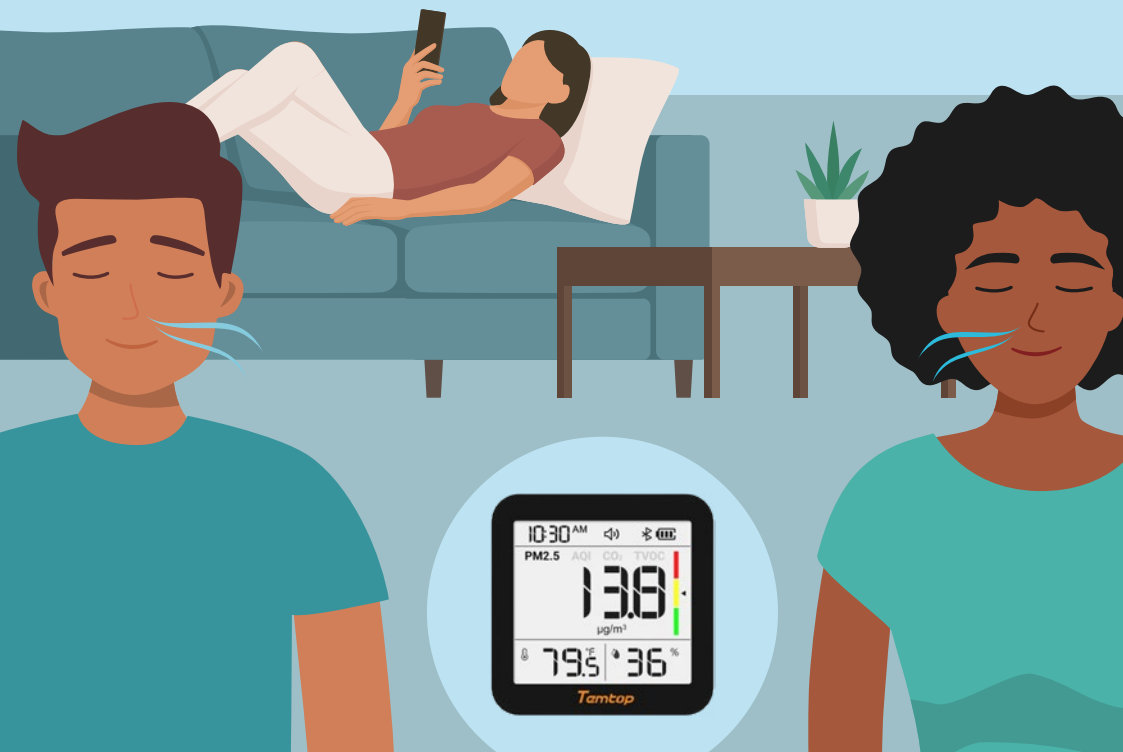


Breathe Better at Home



Measure your home's air quality. Make small changes. Breathe healthier air.



www.camden.gov.uk/air-quality-monitor-loans

What does indoor air quality mean?

Indoor air quality tells us how clean and healthy the air inside our homes is. Indoor air pollution includes tiny particles (dust), chemicals and gases that can harm our health.



When pollution levels are high, indoor air quality is poor and breathing the air can affect our health.

Why is indoor air quality important?

Breathing polluted air can damage our lungs and other parts of the body. It increases the risk of illnesses such as asthma, heart disease, lung cancer, dementia and diabetes.

Children, older people and people with existing health conditions are especially at risk.

A stylized illustration of a house with a dark green roof and walls. Inside the house, there is a blue oven with a red flame and a pink basket filled with cleaning supplies like a mop, spray bottles, and a bucket. Outside the house, there are several green trees.

**The air inside
your home can
sometimes be more
polluted than the
air outside**

**The good news
is that simple
steps, such
as improving
ventilation, can
often make the
air in your home
healthier.**

Key indoor air pollutants



This section describes the main indoor air pollutants, where they come from, and how they can affect your health.

Particulate matter (PM)



Particulate matter (PM) is made up of tiny particles (dust) that can travel deep into the lungs and even enter the bloodstream.

+ It increases the risk of heart and lung disease.

Common indoor sources include:

- Cooking (especially frying, grilling, roasting, or burning something)
- Burning candles or incense
- Wood stoves, log burners and fireplaces
- Smoking and vaping
- Gas heating appliances
- Cleaning sprays
- DIY work (sanding, painting)
- Pet dander and dust movement
- Pollution coming in from outside (if right next to a construction site or a smoky restaurant, for example)



Key indoor air pollutants

Volatile organic compounds (VOCs)

? Volatile organic compounds (VOCs) are gases released from a range of chemical products we use at home.

+ They can cause headaches and eye irritation, and some VOCs can increase the risk of long-term health problems.

Common indoor sources include:

- Paints and varnishes
- Cleaning products (especially scented products, bleach and disinfectant)
- Air fresheners and room sprays
- Scented candles
- Perfumes, cosmetics, and body sprays
- New furniture
- New carpets and flooring
- Adhesives, glues, sealants and caulks



Carbon dioxide (CO₂)

? Carbon dioxide (CO₂) builds up when there is not enough fresh air. High levels usually mean your home needs better ventilation. **+** It can cause drowsiness, headaches, poor concentration and disturbed sleep.

Common indoor sources include:

- Human breathing (largest source)
- Gas-burning appliances (e.g. stoves/hobs, ovens and gas boilers)
- Overcrowded homes (too many people in poorly ventilated homes)



Remember, you should have a carbon monoxide alarm in every room that has a gas- or fuel-burning appliance.

Key indoor air pollutants

Nitrogen dioxide (NO₂)

? Nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) is produced when gas or other fuels are burned indoors. **+** It can irritate the lungs and make asthma worse, especially in children.

Common indoor sources include:

- Gas stoves/hobs and ovens
- Gas boilers and water heaters
- Kerosene or paraffin heaters
- Tobacco smoke
- Candles and incense
- Pollution coming in from outside (if right next to a busy road)



Humidity

? Humidity is the amount of water in the air. Too much humidity can cause condensation, damp and mould.

+ Mould can damage your lungs and trigger asthma and allergies.

Common indoor sources include:

- Cooking with gas stoves/hobs (because burning gas creates water vapour)
- Boiling water for cooking
- Showering and bathing
- Drying clothes indoors (especially if we dry clothes on radiators)



Home ventilation – key principles

Remove pollution at source

- **Kitchen:** use a cooker extractor that vents outside if possible, while cooking and for up to 20 minutes afterwards (remember, “Pan on, fan on”)
- **Bathroom:** use extractor fans during showers or baths and leave them running for at least 15 minutes afterwards
- **Utility rooms:** ventilate tumble dryers and rooms where laundry is dried
- **Close doors:** keep internal doors closed when cooking or showering to stop moisture and pollutants from spreading through the home

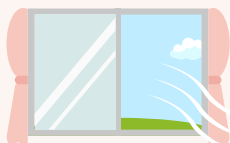
Keep fresh air moving

- Open windows in bedrooms for up to 15 minutes, especially after sleeping
- Open windows on opposite sides of the home to create airflow. Even if opening slightly (around 2–5 cm)
- In flats or homes with windows on one side only, open windows and internal doors in different rooms to improve air movement.
- A fan can help move air through the home if needed

Choose the best times to ventilate

- When it is very hot outdoors, keep windows and blinds shut when they are in full sun
- If living near a busy road, ventilate early in the morning or later in the evening when traffic levels are lower

The “short burst” ventilation method



In colder weather, open windows wide for 5–15 minutes instead of leaving them slightly open all day. This quickly replaces polluted air while keeping most of the heat in your home because walls and furniture stay warm.

Reducing air pollution indoors

Along with good ventilation, reducing sources of indoor air pollution can make a big difference. Small changes to everyday activities can improve the air in your home without costing a lot or changing your lifestyle.

Cooking

- Try to avoid burning food
- Choose cooking oils that don't smoke easily (e.g. rapeseed and sunflower oil)
- Cover pots and pans to reduce water vapour and save energy
- If possible, replace a gas hob with an induction hob. Induction cooking produces less indoor air pollution and water vapour, and uses energy more efficiently

Personal care

- Choose liquids or creams instead of sprays where possible
- Use sprays in a well-ventilated room or open a window afterwards

Smoking/vaping

- Don't smoke or vape indoors. This is one of the most effective ways to improve indoor air quality

Cleaning

- Choose unscented cleaning products
- Use liquids or creams instead of sprays
- Use disinfectants and bleach only when needed
- Never mix cleaning products

Decorating and furnishings

- If you are painting, choose a 'low-VOC' paint
- Choose 'low-VOC' or 'toxic-free' furniture and materials, if there is an option to do so
- Second-hand furniture usually emits fewer VOCs than new furniture
- Remember to ventilate well during (and after) decorating or purchasing new furniture, carpets or flooring
- Choose unscented or soy/ beeswax candles where possible. If you burn candles or incense, ventilate the room afterwards

Borrow an indoor air quality monitor



Measure your home's air quality.
Make small changes. Breathe better

Monitors can be borrowed for
three weeks free of charge

Complete our online expression
of interest form, accessible via
the QR code



 www.camden.gov.uk/air-quality-monitor-loans

Or email AirQuality@camden.gov.uk