

Dust storms and asthma

About dust storms

It's important that people with asthma or other respiratory conditions be prepared when dust storms are forecast in their area. High levels of dust can irritate the lungs and cause an asthma flare up. The stress from a severe weather event can also cause high emotions such as anxiety which can also trigger asthma symptoms.

Things to remember

- Dust storms bring increased air pollution which causes breathing difficulties in people with asthma by irritating the lungs.
- The longer you're exposed, the greater chance for symptoms.
- Children and the elderly are most at risk of breathing difficulties.
- Symptoms can linger for days after the dust storm

Dust storm asthma plan

People with asthma are advised to take the following precautions to minimise the effects of dust storms on their health.

- Stay indoors, with windows, doors and air vents closed.
- Stay in air-conditioned premises, if possible.
- If you have an air conditioner switch it to "recycle" or "recirculate" to reduce the amount of dust entering your home.
- Take preventer medication, as directed.
- Avoid vigorous exercise outdoors.
- Follow your personal asthma action plan.

First aid for asthma

If asthma symptoms occur, don't delay:

- Follow your personal asthma action plan.
- If you don't have an asthma action plan, take 4 separate puffs of a blue/grey reliever
- If the symptoms aren't going away or are getting worse, follow the steps in first aid for asthma

Anyone with concerns about their asthma should seek medical advice from their health practitioner, and anyone experiencing wheezing, chest tightness or difficulty breathing should seek urgent medical assistance.

Download first aid for asthma charts:

[First aid for asthma 12+.](#)

[First aid for asthma children under 12.](#)

Information for health professionals

Increased presentations for asthma should be expected during dust storms or periods of high dust levels.

General practices and pharmacies around these areas should ensure they have good supplies of reliever medications and spacers, particularly for emergency use.