

CREATOR BRIEFING

Healthy air, healthy mind

The connection between air pollution and mental health is a critical but overlooked aspect of mental well-being

1 in 8

People worldwide living with a mental health disorder

[World Health Organization](#)

99%

Proportion of world population who breathe unsafe air

[World Health Organization](#)

1 in 3

Americans live in places with unhealthy levels of air pollution

[2023 State of the Air Report](#)

72%

Of the population is of color in the U.S. counties with the worst air pollution

[2023 State of the Air Report](#)

WHAT THE SCIENCE SAYS

Air pollution takes a mental toll

- Research suggests that exposure to air pollution can have a profound and enduring negative effect on mental health.
- Several studies indicate that even short-term exposure to common air pollutants can be associated with an increased risk of mental disorders such as depression and anxiety.
- Recent studies have discovered a link between exposure to air pollution and an increased risk of suicide.

Kids are particularly vulnerable

- Children are especially vulnerable to the impacts of air pollution on mental health because their brains are still developing.
- Poor air quality is linked to an elevated risk of bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, personality disorder, major depression, affective disorders, and suicide in children and adolescents.
- Children exposed to elevated concentrations of indoor air pollution at home are at increased risk of developing ADHD symptoms and other behavioral problems.

Indoor air quality is critical

- Outdoor air pollution penetrates indoors, and, because we spend up to 90% of our lives indoors, the majority of outdoor air pollution you breathe happens indoors!
- Because indoor spaces largely determine our overall exposure to common air pollutants, improving indoor air quality is critical to improving our mental health.

HEALTHY AIR, HEALTHY MIND: TAKE ACTION

Monitor your indoor and local air quality

- Be aware of the air quality in your area by regularly checking [air quality indexes](#).
- If the outdoor air is polluted, consider limiting time outdoors and keeping windows closed.
- Install an air quality monitor in your home to understand how everyday activities impact the air you breathe.

Take these practical steps to improve your air quality

- Reduce your use of products with [fragrances](#).
- Reduce [candle and incense](#) use, especially indoors.
- Turn on the [range hood](#) or open a window while cooking.
- Regularly dust surfaces and vacuum floors.
- Upgrade filters to a [MERV13](#) or better.

Support clean air initiatives

- Support and advocate for policies and practices that reduce air pollution in your communities.

Prioritize your mental health

- [Find resources to improve your mental wellbeing](#) at Project Healthy Minds.
- If you or someone you know is struggling with mental health symptoms, seek professional help or dial 988 to access a crisis lifeline.

LINKS TO SHARE

Monitor your local air quality | www.airnow.gov

Make your own air cleaner | schools.for.health.org/diy-air-cleaners

Get the right portable air cleaner | forhealth.org/tools/portable-air-cleaner-calculator

Find resources to improve your mental health | projecthealthyminds.com/partnerships/harvard

RECOMMENDED HASHTAGS

#HealthyAirHealthyMind #HealthyBuildings #CleanAirMatters #BreatheWell #WorldMentalHealthDay



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