

ASTHMA:

It's All Over the Map!

When you have asthma, where you live can make a big difference to how you feel. Depending on your triggers, you may have fewer symptoms and less severe asthma attacks in one place than in another. Whether you're relocating or just traveling, it helps to review the "geography of asthma" so you'll be prepared. In general, more people in the Northeast and Midwest have asthma than in the South and West.



According to the American Academy of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology (AAAAI), in 2019, the most recent listing, the following large cities ranked as BEST to live in for those with asthma:

- Cape Coral, Florida
- McAllen, Texas
- Houston, Texas
- Sarasota, Florida
- Daytona Beach, Florida

And the WORST large cities to live in if you have asthma include:

- Springfield, Massachusetts
- Dayton, Ohio
- Greensboro, North Carolina
- Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
- Cleveland, Ohio

City living can expose you to air pollution. Ozone, a gas which is formed when pollutants from factories, industrial operations and cars react with sunlight, plays a big role in dirtying the air in cities. According to the Environmental Protection Agency (E.P.A.), ozone can worsen bronchitis, emphysema and asthma by irritating the lungs and reducing lung function. Ozone is common in cities during the summer, but can also reach high levels during the winter. The wind can carry ozone hundreds of miles from where it's produced so that even rural areas are affected. Take a look at www.airnow.gov and type in your zip code to see air quality conditions in your location.

Besides ozone, other small particles in city smoke, dust and haze can trigger asthma. Cities which ban smoking in public places tend to have higher air quality.

So how about country living when it comes to breathing easy? Different sorts of air pollutants in rural areas can trigger

asthma attacks, such as agricultural chemicals, animal dander and urine, grain dust, and pollen. But according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, air quality is still better in rural counties, where concentrations of pollutants are lower.

Where you live makes a difference to your health in many ways. Keeping asthma under control depends on knowledge: of your own particular triggers, of the air quality where you live – and on staying indoors, if possible, when air quality is poor.

A tool which could help is the map on the AAAAI website: <https://pollen.aaaai.org/#/> It shows pollen and spore levels in many large cities around the U.S. and can help you plan your day if your asthma symptoms seem worse than usual or you're traveling. A little knowledge can go a long way towards keeping you healthy and symptom-free!