FREE GUIDE · OCTOBER TO FEBRUARY

Smog Season *Survival* Guide

Breathing easier with asthma through India's pollution months: a practical, plain-language companion for people with asthma and the families who look after them.





WRITTEN BY

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Breathing easier, together.

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

How to use this guide

This is not a book you need to read cover to cover. Dip in when the AQI turns, keep the checklists on the fridge, and share the pages that help.

Read once, early

Sections 1 to 3 explain why smog matters for asthma and how to read the AQI. Ideally read them in early October, before the worst weeks.

Use daily

Section 4 is a simple routine for bad-air days. The tracker on page 22 helps you notice patterns to discuss with your doctor.

Take to your doctor

Section 10 has questions to ask before the season. A written, doctor-reviewed asthma action plan is your best preparation.

Know the red flags

Section 11 lists warning signs and what to do in an emergency. Please read it now, not during an attack.

An important note

I am a fellow person with asthma, not a doctor. This guide is for general education and support. It does not diagnose, treat or cure anything, and it does not replace advice from your own doctor or emergency care. Always follow the plan your doctor has given you, and ask them before changing any medicine. If breathing is getting worse quickly, seek urgent medical help.

Smog Season Survival Guide · First edition, November 2026
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Facts in this guide are drawn from public sources listed on page 25. Air-quality rules and advisories can change, so check the latest official guidance.

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PRINTABLES

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IN AN EMERGENCY

Go straight to page 18.
Call **108** or **112**.

1 A NOTE FROM ME

Dear friend,
you are not alone in this haze.

I have lived with asthma for more than 30 years. For many of us in North India, the months from October to February have a feeling of their own. The sky turns milky, the morning walk starts to feel like a bad idea, and we find ourselves checking the AQI before we even open the curtains.

If you are a parent, you may be watching your child cough at night and wondering whether to send them to school. If you live with asthma yourself, you may be tired of feeling tight-chested, tired of explaining it, and a little tired of being careful all the time.

I wrote this guide because I wanted one calm, practical place to turn to during the smog months. Nothing in it is magic. It is a collection of small, sensible habits drawn from public health guidance in India and around the world, written in plain words, with checklists you can actually use.

Please treat it as a companion to your doctor, never a substitute. The most powerful thing you can do this season is to sit down with your doctor before the worst weeks arrive and agree a written plan. Everything else in these pages works best on top of that.

Breathing easier, together,

Siddhant

Siddhant Jain, founder of Asthma Friend, Dehradun

INSIDE YOU WILL FIND

- ✓ The Indian AQI bands, explained
- ✓ A daily bad-air routine
- ✓ How to choose a purifier and a mask
- ✓ School and festival checklists
- ✓ Warning signs and an emergency plan
- ✓ Printable trackers

THE ONE THING

If you only do one thing after reading this, book a visit with your doctor and ask for a written asthma action plan for the season.

2 THE SCIENCE, IN PLAIN WORDS

Why smog hits asthma harder

Asthma means your airways are sensitive and can swell, tighten and fill with mucus. Polluted air is one of the things that can set that off.



Both can reach deep into the lungs.
PM2.5 can even enter the bloodstream.

Sizes shown relative to each other, not to scale. Source: WHO, US EPA.

PM2.5 & PM10

Tiny particles of dust, smoke and soot. PM2.5 is 2.5 micrometres across or smaller, far too small to see. WHO notes both can travel deep into the lungs, and PM2.5 can enter the bloodstream.

Ozone (O_3)

Not the protective layer high in the sky. Ground-level ozone forms when other gases react in sunlight and is a main part of smog. The US EPA lists aggravation of asthma among its effects.

Nitrogen dioxide (NO_2)

A gas released when fuel is burned, especially by transport and industry (WHO). MoHFW lists nitrogen oxides among the key harmful pollutants.

WHAT THE RESEARCH SAYS

The Global Initiative for Asthma (GINA) reports that studies link ozone, nitrogen oxides and particulate matter with asthma symptoms, flare-ups and hospital visits. It also notes a lag of up to about 3 days between high pollution and higher medicine use, so a bad-air day can still be affecting you a day or two later.

QUICK CHECK

Do your symptoms tend to rise on, or just after, high-AQI days? Spend two weeks with the tracker on page 22 and you will have a clear answer to share with your doctor.

2 THE SCIENCE, IN PLAIN WORDS

Where does the smog come from?

India's health ministry (MoHFW) lists many sources of outdoor air pollution. In the smog months several of them pile up at once:

- **Vehicle exhaust** and road dust
- **Construction** and demolition dust
- **Crop residue burning** in the fields
- **Firecrackers** during festivals
- **Burning garbage** wood, leaves, waste
- **Biomass & coal** for cooking and heating

And indoors, MoHFW adds **mosquito coils, incense sticks, cigarettes and bidis, sprays and chemical fumes**. In other words, closing the door does not automatically mean clean air. We will come back to this in Section 5.

Why it can feel worse for people with asthma

- MoHFW lists people with asthma among the **vulnerable groups**, along with children under five, older people and pregnant women.
- Short, high exposures can cause **coughing, wheezing, chest discomfort** and eye, nose and throat irritation, and in vulnerable groups can **worsen asthma** (MoHFW).
- Polluted days often come with cold air and seasonal coughs and colds. GINA suggests avoiding polluted places when you have a viral infection, where possible.

You can't always see it

MoHFW points out that air pollution is often not visible, because the particles are smaller than the eye can detect. A clear-looking day can still have a high AQI.

So trust the number, not the view.

15 micrograms per cubic metre: the **WHO 24-hour guideline for PM2.5** (2021). India's AQI has its own scale, where PM2.5 up to 60 µg/m³ still counts as "Satisfactory" (CPCB). Both numbers are useful; this guide uses the Indian AQI because that is what your apps show.

3 READING THE AQI

The Indian AQI, colour by colour

The National Air Quality Index from the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) turns readings of up to eight pollutants into one number and colour. The **worst** pollutant sets the AQI.

BAND	POSSIBLE HEALTH IMPACT (CPCB)	WHAT YOU CAN DO WITH ASTHMA
Good 0–50	Minimal impact	Normal routine. A good day to air the house.
Satisfactory 51–100	Minor breathing discomfort to sensitive people	Carry your reliever as always. Notice how you feel during long or hard exercise outdoors.
Moderate 101–200	Breathing discomfort to people with lung disease such as asthma, heart disease, children and older adults	Avoid prolonged or strenuous outdoor exercise. Move workouts indoors. Keep an eye on symptoms.
Poor 201–300	Breathing discomfort to most people on prolonged exposure	Avoid outdoor physical activity. Keep windows shut morning and late evening. Mask for necessary trips.
Very Poor 301–400	Respiratory illness on prolonged exposure; more pronounced in lung and heart disease	Stay indoors as much as you can and keep activity low. Run your purifier. Follow your action plan closely.
Severe 401–500	Affects healthy people; serious impact on people with lung or heart disease, even with light activity	Stay indoors, keep activity low. Postpone non-essential trips. Contact your doctor early if symptoms rise.

Bands and health impacts: CPCB National AQI. "What you can do" column is general guidance based on the MoHFW health advisory for vulnerable groups and GINA; it does not replace your own doctor's plan.

SIDDHANT'S TIP

Don't wait for Poor. CPCB's own description of the **Moderate** band names people with asthma, so it makes a sensible early-warning point to start your bad-air routine. Agree your personal trigger point with your doctor.

3 READING THE AQI

How to check the AQI where you are

The official SAMEER app (CPCB)

1. Search **"SAMEER"** by Central Pollution Control Board on the Google Play Store or Apple App Store.
2. Allow location, or pick your city from the list or map.
3. Choose the **monitoring station nearest your home**, school or office.
4. Note the AQI, the band colour and the **main pollutant**.

CPCB describes SAMEER as giving hourly updates of the National AQI. You can also register air-pollution complaints in it.



Example reading. A needle in orange means "Poor": time for your bad-air routine.

Other ways to check

- **CPCB AQI website:** airquality.cpcb.gov.in, by state, city and station.
- **SAFAR** (IITM, Ministry of Earth Sciences), named in the MoHFW advisory, for its covered cities.
- Weather and map apps often show AQI too. They may use different scales, so **compare like with like**.

QUICK CHECK

Before you trust a reading, ask three questions:

- **When?** Check the timestamp. An old reading can mislead.
- **Where?** City averages hide local spots. CPCB itself notes that air quality varies across locations, so use your nearest station.
- **What?** Is PM2.5, PM10 or ozone driving the number? It helps you choose the right protection.

SIDDHANT'S TIP

Make checking automatic. Keep the SAMEER app on your home screen, note your nearest station, and check it at the same moment every day, such as when you put the kettle on for morning chai. A one-line message on the family group ("AQI 260 today, indoor play") can save a lot of daily debate.

4 EVERY DAY

A daily routine for bad-air days

On days when the AQI is Moderate or worse, a simple routine takes the guesswork out. Stick it on the fridge.

Wake up

Check the AQI and how your chest feels. If your doctor has asked you to track peak flow, note it now. Take your regular medicines exactly as prescribed.

Morning

On Poor to Severe days, keep outer doors and windows shut in the morning, as MoHFW advises. Skip the morning walk or jog.

Heading out

Reliever inhaler (and spacer, if you use one) in your bag. A well-fitted N95 for longer trips. Choose routes away from slow, heavy traffic.

Midday

If you need to air the house, MoHFW suggests ventilating between 12 and 4 pm on poor-air days. Keep it short and check the AQI first.

Evening

Avoid late-evening walks and exercise outdoors on bad days. Move movement indoors: stretching, yoga, a dance break.

Night

Run a purifier in the bedroom with the door closed. Note today's AQI and symptoms in your tracker.

Small things that help

- Drink enough water and eat plenty of fruit and vegetables, a "no-regret" step in the MoHFW advisory.
- MoHFW also suggests rinsing eyes with running water and warm-water gargles.
- Wet-mop instead of sweeping, so dust is not thrown back into the air.
- Keep medicines where you can reach them, and check you have enough stock.

WATCH FOR

If you need your reliever more than usual, or symptoms wake you at night, follow your action plan and contact your doctor. If breathing is getting worse quickly, go to page 18 now.

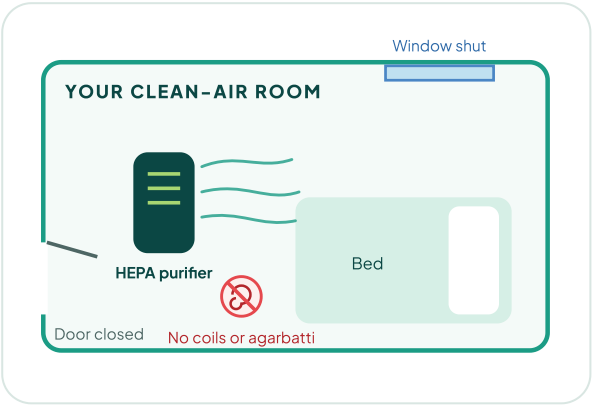
5 AT HOME

Making your home a clean-air zone

You can't fix the city's air, but you can make one room much easier to breathe in. Start with the room you sleep in.

Windows and fresh air

- On Poor to Severe days, keep outer doors and windows closed during the morning and late evening (MoHFW).
- If you need to ventilate, MoHFW suggests doing it between 12 and 4 pm. Check the AQI first.
- Using an AC? Set it to **recirculate** so it does not pull in outside air (MoHFW).



Cleaning without stirring dust

- Wet-mop floors and wipe surfaces with a damp cloth rather than sweeping (MoHFW).
- If you vacuum, use a machine with a HEPA filter (MoHFW).
- If dusting triggers you, ask someone else to do it while you are in another room.

Smoke we make ourselves

Cooking smoke

GINA advises using non-polluting cooking and heating sources and venting fumes outdoors where possible. MoHFW recommends clean fuels such as LPG or electricity over wood, coal or kerosene. Use the chimney or exhaust fan, and keep the kitchen door shut while frying or making tadka.

Agarbatti, dhoop & mosquito coils

MoHFW lists mosquito coils and incense sticks as indoor pollution sources and advises against burning them in closed rooms. If puja matters to your family, consider keeping it brief, using fewer sticks, and lighting them in a room away from the person with asthma. Mosquito nets and window screens are smoke-free.

SIDDHANT'S TIP

Pick one room and make it the clean-air room: shut window, door closed, purifier on, no smoke of any kind. On the worst nights that one room can make the difference between a restless night and a reasonable one.

5 AT HOME

Choosing an air purifier: what to look for

Purifiers can be expensive, so it is worth knowing what actually matters. This checklist is based on US EPA guidance on home air cleaners and the MoHFW advisory.

True HEPA filter

HEPA (high-efficiency particulate air) filters are how most portable purifiers achieve a high clean-air delivery rate for particles (EPA). Be wary of vague labels like “HEPA-type”. Ask the seller exactly which filter grade it uses.

CADR that fits your room

CADR, the clean air delivery rate, tells you how much filtered air it delivers. The higher the CADR, the larger the area it can serve. Choose one with a CADR big enough for your room (EPA).

Room size, worked out

Multiply the length by the width of the room and compare it with the maximum room size on the box. For high ceilings or open-plan spaces, size up or use more than one unit (EPA).

No ozone, please

Avoid purifiers that work by producing ozone, a lung irritant (EPA, MoHFW). EPA notes some ionisers, electrostatic and plasma types may emit ozone, so check before you buy.

Using it well

- Keep doors and windows of that room closed while it runs.
- Replace or clean filters as the maker instructs. EPA notes a dirty, overloaded filter won’t work well.
- Particle filters do not remove gases. For smells and gases, an activated carbon filter helps (EPA).
- Filtering is not a reason to keep smoke sources indoors. EPA notes filtration does not replace removing the source.

An honest note

GINA says air filters can reduce exposure to fine particles, but studies have not shown a consistent effect on asthma outcomes. A purifier is a helpful layer of protection. It is **not** a reason to change your medicines.

Plants: myth versus reality

COMMON BELIEF

A few money plants or snake plants will clean the air in my flat.

WHAT THE EVIDENCE SAYS

The US EPA says there is no evidence that a reasonable number of houseplants removes significant pollution in homes. Enjoy plants for joy, but don’t over-water them: EPA notes overly damp soil can encourage microbes that bother people with allergies.

6 MASKS

Masks that actually filter smog

The right mask, worn well, can cut what you breathe in on a necessary trip. The wrong one gives a false sense of safety.

✓ Use

A certified **N95** or **N99** respirator (MoHFW), or an equivalent certified standard such as **FFP2**. Look for the standard printed on the mask itself, and a fit that seals.

⚠ Don't rely on

Paper masks, handkerchiefs, scarves, dupattas and cloth masks. MoHFW says these are not effective against pollution. CDC adds surgical masks to that list for smoke.

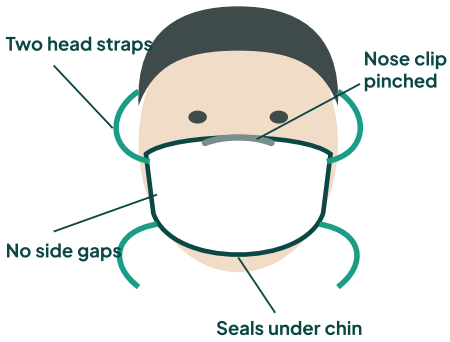


Illustration: what a good seal looks like

Getting the fit right

- Choose a mask with **two straps that go around your head**. EPA notes ear-loop styles are not designed to seal tightly.
- It should cover your nose and sit **under your chin**, with no gaps at the sides.
- Do the seal check in the pack instructions each time. When you breathe in, the mask should pull in slightly with no air leaking at the edges (AirNow).
- Beards stop a proper seal and reduce protection (AirNow).
- Replace masks as the maker instructs, and throw one away if it is dirty or hard to breathe through.

CHILDREN AND MASKS

CDC says masks and respirators should not be worn by children under 2. Older children can wear one if it fits over the nose and under the chin, doesn't block vision, is comfortable, and they will keep it on. Most certified sizes are designed for adults. For young children, staying in cleaner indoor air matters more than any mask.

IF A MASK FEELS HARD TO BREATHE IN

Respirators can make breathing harder. EPA and AirNow advise anyone with lung problems to ask their doctor before using one. If you feel breathless, dizzy or unwell in a mask, move to cleaner air and take it off. If symptoms don't settle, get medical help. A valved mask may feel more comfortable (EPA).

7 OUT AND ABOUT

Going out: walks, exercise and the commute

Life doesn't stop for smog. The aim is not to stay locked in, but to choose *when*, *where* and *how hard*.

Walks and exercise

- GINA encourages regular physical activity for people with asthma. On bad-air days, move it indoors rather than dropping it.
- GINA suggests avoiding strenuous outdoor activity during high pollution.
- On Poor to Severe days, MoHFW advises against morning and late-evening outdoor walks, runs and jogs.
- EPA notes exercise makes you breathe in more ozone, a reason to keep effort low on high-ozone days.
- Ask your doctor whether to use your reliever before exercise. Don't decide this alone.

Plan the essentials

- Bunch errands into one trip instead of several.
- Check the hourly AQI and go when it is lower.
- Avoid places MoHFW flags as high-pollution: slow heavy traffic, construction sites, industrial areas, brick kilns.
- Indoor options: a mall walk, a covered badminton court, yoga at home.

Your commute, mode by mode

By car
Keep windows up and set the AC to recirculate (MoHFW). Avoid idling in jams where you can, and keep the car smoke-free.

By metro or bus
Wear your N95 for the walk to the station and on crowded platforms. Carry your reliever in an easy-reach pocket, not deep in a bag.

By two-wheeler
You are right in the traffic stream. Wear a well-sealed N95 under the helmet, and use routes away from slow, heavy traffic (MoHFW) even if they are a little longer.

On foot or by auto
Pick quieter lanes over main roads. GINA notes living or studying close to main roads is linked with more asthma problems.

SIDDHANT'S TIP

School runs: if you drop children off, park a little away from the school gate and avoid waiting with the engine running. Ask the school whether parents can switch engines off at the gate. Cleaner air at the gate helps every child, not just yours.

8 FOR PARENTS

Children with asthma in smog season

MoHFW counts young children among the groups most vulnerable to pollution. Children also breathe hard when they play, and they rarely stop to say “my chest feels tight”.

Signs to watch in children

- A cough that is worse at night or after play
- Wheezing, or a whistling sound when breathing
- Getting out of breath sooner than friends, or stopping games
- Complaints that their chest feels tight or “funny”
- Needing the reliever more often than usual

If you notice these, follow your child’s action plan and speak to their doctor. Emergency signs are on page 18.

Outdoor play, rethought

- On Moderate days and above, swap long, hard outdoor play for shorter, gentler play, as the MoHFW advisory suggests for vulnerable groups.
- On Poor to Severe days, plan indoor play: carrom, ludo, dance-offs, building forts, an indoor treasure hunt.
- Let them help check the AQI. Children cooperate more when they understand the colours.
- Keep their reliever and spacer with them, not in the staff room.

At school

Before the season

Share a copy of your child’s written action plan with the class teacher and the school nurse or office. Make sure they know where the inhaler is kept.

PE and assemblies

Ask whether PE, sports practice and outdoor assemblies move indoors on high-AQI days, and how the school decides.

Spare inhaler

Ask your doctor whether your child should keep a spare reliever (and spacer) at school, and check its expiry date each term.

SIDDHANT’S TIP

Teachers are often juggling forty children. A short, friendly note with your child’s triggers, their medicines and your phone number gets read far more than a long letter. There’s a fill-in version on the next page.

8 PRINTABLE · FOR YOUR CHILD'S TEACHER

A note for my child's school

Fill in, attach a copy of the action plan from your doctor, and hand it to the class teacher. Keep a photo on your phone.

Dear _____,

My child _____ in class _____ has asthma. During the pollution season their symptoms can get worse, especially with outdoor activity. I would be grateful for your help with the following:

Their usual triggers

_____

_____

_____

Medicines at school & where kept

_____

_____

_____

Early signs to look out for

_____

_____

On high-AQI days, please

- ☐ Let them do PE or sport indoors, or at a gentler pace
- ☐ Let them use their reliever whenever they need to, as per their plan
- ☐ Call me if they need their reliever more than usual
- ☐ Follow the emergency steps in their action plan and call 108 or 112 if they are struggling to breathe

Parent / guardian name & phone

_____

_____

Doctor's name & phone

_____

_____

Thank you for looking out for my child.

9 FESTIVALS & STUBBLE-BURNING WEEKS

When the worst weeks arrive

Around Diwali and the crop-burning weeks, several pollution sources can peak together. MoHFW lists crop-residue burning and firecrackers among the causes of outdoor pollution, and advises everyone to avoid bursting crackers. A little planning turns a frightening week into a manageable one.

2 WEEKS BEFORE

- [ ] See your doctor and review your action plan for the season
- [ ] Check medicine stock and expiry dates; refill early, before shops close for the festival
- [ ] Service the purifier and buy spare filters
- [ ] Buy a pack of well-fitting N95 masks
- [ ] Save emergency numbers and your nearest 24-hour hospital

FESTIVAL DAYS

- [ ] Stay indoors in your clean-air room when crackers start
- [ ] Keep windows shut, purifier on
- [ ] Choose diyas, lights, rangoli and sweets over crackers
- [ ] Ask family to burst no crackers near the house
- [ ] Keep the reliever within reach, not in a festive handbag upstairs
- [ ] Explain to guests, kindly, why the windows stay shut

THE DAYS AFTER

- [ ] Remember the lag: symptoms can rise a day or more after high pollution (GINA)
- [ ] Keep tracking symptoms and AQI
- [ ] Ease back into outdoor activity only as the AQI improves
- [ ] Call your doctor if you're using your reliever more than usual
- [ ] Wet-mop to clear settled dust and ash

SIDDHANT'S TIP

Travelling home for the festival? Pack medicines in your hand luggage, carry a copy of your action plan, and look up the nearest hospital at your destination before you go.

TALKING TO FAMILY

Saying "no crackers" can feel like spoiling the fun. It often helps to explain it as a health need, not a judgement: "My chest can't handle the smoke, so let's do the lights together instead." Many relatives are glad to help once they understand.

10 WORKING WITH YOUR DOCTOR

Your plan, reviewed before the season

GINA recommends that people with asthma have a **written asthma action plan**, so they and their carers know how to recognise and respond to worsening asthma. The best time to review it is early October, not the night of Diwali.

What a written plan usually covers

Green: doing well
What I take every day, as prescribed. What to do before exercise, if anything.

Yellow: getting worse
The signs that mean my asthma is slipping, and exactly what my doctor wants me to do and when to call.

Red: emergency
The danger signs, what to do immediately, and when to call 108 or 112 or go to hospital.

Free tool: build your draft plan

Asthma Friend's free action plan generator helps you organise your medicines, triggers and contacts into a clear plan to take to your doctor.

plan.asthmafriend.com

It is a starting point for the conversation. Your doctor must review and fill in the medical parts.

Questions to ask before the season

1. Is my asthma well controlled right now, and how will we know if it isn't?
2. Should my plan change on high-AQI days, and at what AQI level?
3. Can you check my inhaler technique (and my child's)? Should we use a spacer?
4. Should I monitor peak flow? What is my personal best, and what numbers mean act now?
5. Is it safe for me to wear an N95 for longer periods?
6. Should I keep a spare reliever at school, work or in the car?
7. Which vaccines, such as the flu vaccine, are right for me or my child?
8. Which signs mean I should come in, and which mean go straight to hospital?

ABOUT YOUR MEDICINES

Please don't increase, reduce or stop any medicine on your own because the AQI is high. Follow your doctor's plan, and ask your doctor whether, and how, it should change on high-AQI days. Keep taking your prescribed medicines even when you feel well, unless your doctor tells you otherwise.

11 WARNING SIGNS

Know the red flags. Act early.

An asthma attack can become life-threatening. Read this page now, share it with your family, and keep the emergency card on page 23 filled in.

⚠ Signs of an asthma attack

From Asthma + Lung UK. You may have all or only some of these.

- Symptoms getting worse quickly: cough, breathlessness, wheeze, tight chest
- Your reliever isn't helping as much as usual, or you need it more often
- You find it difficult to walk or talk
- Your peak flow is much lower than usual

Follow the emergency steps in your written action plan straight away.

⚠ Danger signs: get help now

Signs of a severe attack listed by GINA, the NHS and Asthma + Lung UK include:

- ✕ Able to speak only in words, not full sentences
- ✕ Drowsy, confused or very agitated
- ✕ Blue or grey lips or fingertips
- ✕ A child who can't speak or drink
- ✕ Getting worse at any point, or the reliever isn't helping as your plan says it should

IN INDIA, CALL

108

Emergency ambulance service in most states and UTs (National Health Mission)

112

National emergency number (Emergency Response Support System)

While you wait for help

1. Sit up straight and try to stay calm (NHS).
2. Use your reliever **exactly as your written action plan says** for an attack.
3. Move away from smoke or polluted air if you can.
4. Don't drive yourself to hospital (NHS). Ask someone to take you, or wait for the ambulance.
5. Take your action plan, medicines and a phone with you.
6. Even if you recover, the NHS advises seeing a doctor within 2 days after an attack, to review your treatment.

⚠ **SEEK URGENT CARE**

If in doubt, get help. Never wait to see whether it passes when breathing is getting harder. It is always right to call for help or go to the nearest emergency department. This guide cannot judge how serious your symptoms are; a doctor can.

12 MYTHS VERSUS FACTS

What we've all been told

Advice from family comes from love. Here is how some common beliefs compare with what public health bodies say, offered with respect.

BELIEF	WHAT WE KNOW
If I can't see the smog, the air is fine.	Pollution is often invisible to the naked eye (MoHFW). Check the AQI, not the sky.
Once I'm indoors with the door shut, I'm safe.	Indoor air has its own sources: incense, mosquito coils, cooking smoke, cigarettes, sprays (MoHFW). Make one room truly clean, and keep smoke out of it.
Steam, kadha or haldi doodh will open my chest instead of the inhaler.	Many of us grew up with these and they can feel soothing. But they don't replace medicines your doctor prescribed. Hot water can scald, especially around children. Please tell your doctor about any home or traditional remedies you use.
Inhalers are habit-forming, so I should use them as little as possible.	Inhalers deliver medicine straight to the airways. If you're concerned, discuss it with your doctor rather than stopping or cutting down on your own.
A cloth mask or dupatta over the nose is good enough.	MoHFW says cloth, paper masks, handkerchiefs and scarves are not effective against pollution. Use a well-fitted N95 or equivalent.
My air purifier means I can skip medicines.	Filters can cut exposure to fine particles, but GINA notes no consistent effect on asthma outcomes. Purifiers support your plan; they never replace it.
If I felt fine yesterday, the smoggy day has passed me by.	GINA notes asthma medicine use can rise for up to about 3 days after high pollution. Keep tracking after bad days.

13 PRINTABLE · CHECKLIST

Pre-season checklist

Tick these off by mid-October. Print it, pin it up, and share it with the people who help look after you.

Doctor & plan

- [ ] Booked a review with my doctor for early October
- [ ] Have a written, doctor-reviewed asthma action plan
- [ ] Asked whether my plan changes on high-AQI days
- [ ] Had inhaler (and spacer) technique checked
- [ ] Asked about peak flow monitoring and my personal best
- [ ] Asked which vaccines are right for me or my child

Medicines

- [ ] Enough stock of every prescribed medicine for the season
- [ ] Checked expiry dates, including spare inhalers
- [ ] Spare reliever for school, work or the car (if my doctor agrees)
- [ ] Medicines list saved as a photo on my phone

Home & gear

- [ ] Chose a clean-air room and sealed gaps in its windows
- [ ] Purifier serviced; spare filters bought
- [ ] N95 masks that fit everyone who needs one
- [ ] Home set up to wet-mop, not sweep

People

- [ ] Shared the action plan with family, school or office
- [ ] Saved 108 / 112 and my nearest 24-hour hospital
- [ ] Filled in the emergency card on page 23
- [ ] Installed SAMEER and picked my nearest station

SIDDHANT'S TIP

Put a reminder in your phone for the first week of October every year: "Asthma smog prep". Ten minutes with this list, before the season, saves a lot of scrambling later.

13 PRINTABLE · AUDIT

Home clean-air audit

Walk around your home with this sheet. Each tick is one less thing for your lungs to deal with.

Bedroom & clean-air room

- [ ] Windows close tightly; gaps sealed or taped for the season
- [ ] Purifier sized for the room (CADR / room size on the box)
- [ ] No incense, coils or smoking in this room
- [ ] Bedding washed regularly; clutter kept low

Kitchen

- [ ] Chimney or exhaust fan works and is used every time
- [ ] Clean fuel (LPG or electric) used where possible
- [ ] Kitchen door kept shut while frying or tempering

Living areas

- [ ] No mosquito coils; nets or screens instead
- [ ] Agarbatti and dhoop kept brief, away from the person with asthma
- [ ] No smoking indoors, by anyone, ever
- [ ] Floors wet-mopped; HEPA vacuum if vacuuming

Car & outdoors

- [ ] Car AC set to recirculate on bad days
- [ ] No smoking in the car
- [ ] Reliever kept in the car (if doctor agrees) and checked

My three changes this week

13 PRINTABLE · TRACKER

Daily AQI & symptom tracker

One sheet per week. Patterns help your doctor. Score symptoms 0 = none, 1 = mild, 2 = moderate, 3 = bad. Week starting: _____

EACH DAY	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
AQI (morning)							
AQI band colour							
Main pollutant							
Cough (0–3)							
Wheeze (0–3)							
Breathless / tight (0–3)							
Woke at night? (Y/N)							
Reliever uses (count)							
Peak flow (if advised)							
Time outdoors							
Masked outside? (Y/N)							
Notes							

AQI colours: Good | Satisfactory | Moderate | Poor | Very Poor | Severe

TAKE THIS TO YOUR DOCTOR

This tracker is for spotting patterns, not for deciding treatment yourself. If you notice symptoms or reliever use rising, contact your doctor. If you see danger signs, use the emergency steps on page 18.

13 PRINTABLE · EMERGENCY CARD

My asthma emergency plan

Fill this in with your doctor's help. Cut out the card for a wallet or school bag, and stick the plan near the phone.

ASTHMA EMERGENCY CARD — Call 108 / 112

Name _____

Date of birth _____

Reliever medicine _____

Daily medicines _____

Known allergies _____

Doctor & phone _____

Emergency contact 1 _____

Emergency contact 2 _____

Nearest 24-hour hospital _____

✂ Cut along the dashed line

My emergency steps (written with my doctor)

1 _____ 2 _____

3 _____ 4 _____

5 _____ 6 _____

⚠ My early warning signs

_____

_____

_____

⚠ Call for help straight away if

_____

_____

_____

14 JOIN THE COMMUNITY

Breathing easier, *together.*

Asthma Friend is a free, online asthma support and education community for India. Everything we make is free for people with asthma and their families, because access matters more to me than anything else.

The Asthma Friend newsletter

Practical tips, new guides and seasonal reminders, free, in your inbox. Sign up at:

asthmafriend.com

The WhatsApp community

A friendly space to ask questions, share what helps and feel less alone. Please remember fellow members can't give medical advice.

Join on WhatsApp

"Breathe Easier Together" podcast

Plain-language episodes on living well with asthma in India, plus short videos on YouTube.

asthmafriend.com/asthma-friend-podcast

Free asthma action plan tool

Organise your medicines, triggers and contacts into a draft plan to review with your doctor.

plan.asthmafriend.com

SIDDHANT'S TIP

If this guide helped you, the kindest thing you can do is pass it on to one family who might need it this winter, perhaps a parent at your child's school or a neighbour with a cough that won't settle.

Scan a code with your phone camera, or type the address into your browser.

SOURCES

Where the facts come from

Every factual statement in this guide is drawn from the public sources below, checked in November 2026. Advice labelled as a tip is practical, everyday guidance from me, not a clinical recommendation. Guidance and app features change, so please check the latest versions.

1 **Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB)**. National Air Quality Index: AQI categories, health statements and breakpoints. “About National Air Quality Index” and the National AQI bulletin page.
airquality.cpcb.gov.in/ccr_docs/About_AQI.pdf · airquality.cpcb.gov.in/AQI_India/

2 **CPCB – SAMEER app**. App listing: hourly National AQI updates and pollution complaints.
play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.cpcb

3 **Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, NPCCHH (NCDC)**. Advisory on Air Pollution and Health: sources, vulnerable groups, AQI-wise advice, ventilation timing, masks, purifiers, AC recirculation, wet mopping.
ncdc.mohfw.gov.in/uploads/pdf/air6.pdf

4 **World Health Organization**. Ambient (outdoor) air pollution fact sheet (2024); WHO Global Air Quality Guidelines (2021) and news release on PM2.5, PM10, ozone and NO_2.
who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/ambient-(outdoor)-air-quality-and-health · who.int/news/item/22-09-2021-new-who-global-air-quality-guidelines-aim-to-save-millions-of-lives-from-air-pollution

5 **Global Initiative for Asthma (GINA)**. Global Strategy for Asthma Management and Prevention, 2024 report: outdoor and indoor air pollution advice, air filters, written action plans, physical activity, severe exacerbation signs.
ginasthma.org/reports

6 **US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)**. Guide to Air Cleaners in the Home (HEPA, CADR, room size, ozone); Ozone generators sold as air cleaners; Improving indoor air quality (houseplants); Protect yourself from wildfire smoke (respirator fit); PM basics course.
epa.gov/indoor-air-quality-iaq · epa.gov/wildfires

7 **AirNow (US EPA and partners)**. The right respirator and proper fit: seal check, facial hair, cloth masks.
airnow.gov

8 **US CDC**. Wildfire smoke and children: masks for children 2 years and older, not under 2; NIOSH guidance on respirators.
cdc.gov/wildfires · cdc.gov/niosh

9 **Asthma + Lung UK**. Asthma attacks: signs of an asthma attack.
asthmaandlung.org.uk/conditions/asthma/asthma-attacks

10 **NHS (UK)**. Asthma attacks: sit up straight, don’t drive yourself to hospital, see a doctor within 2 days afterwards.
nhs.uk/conditions/asthma/asthma-attack

11 **National Health Mission (MoHFW)**. Dial 108 / 102 ambulance services.
nhm.gov.in

12 **Emergency Response Support System**. 112 as India’s single emergency number.
112.gov.in

PLEASE READ

Disclaimer

This guide is written by Siddhant Jain, founder of Asthma Friend, a person who lives with asthma. I am not a doctor, and this guide has not been reviewed by a medical professional.

The content is for general information, education and support only. It is not medical advice, and it does not diagnose, treat, cure or prevent any condition. It is not a substitute for advice, diagnosis or treatment from a qualified healthcare professional who knows your history.

Always follow the asthma action plan and treatment your own doctor has given you. Do not start, stop or change any medicine, or its dose, without speaking to your doctor. Ask your doctor whether your plan should change during high-AQI days.

In an emergency, do not rely on this guide. If you or someone you care for is struggling to breathe, call 108 or 112, or go to the nearest emergency department straight away.

Mentions of apps, websites, product features or organisations are for information only and are not endorsements. Asthma Friend has no partnership with any organisation named in this guide. Air-quality categories, health advisories and app features can change; check the official source for the latest information.

Information in this guide was checked against the sources listed on page 25 in November 2026. While every effort has been made to keep it accurate, Asthma Friend cannot accept responsibility for decisions made on the basis of this guide.

Members of the Asthma Friend WhatsApp community share personal experiences, not medical advice.

Asthma Friend · asthmafriend.com
An online asthma support and education community for India. Free for people with asthma, always.

Small habits.
A good plan.
A little company.

That is how we get through the smog months. Get the free newsletter and join the community at asthmafriend.com.



Asthma Friend

asthmafriend.com · Breathing easier, together.

Free to share in full for non-commercial use. Not medical advice. In an emergency call 108 or 112.