

Back-to-school tips to helping your kids breathe easier

August 4 2024, by Robin Foster



As kids and teens prepare to head back to school, parents might not have protecting their child's lung health on the top of their to-do lists. But experts say it should be.

"A new school year often means a new environment for students and staff, including new asthma triggers, exposure to new viruses, peer pressure to smoke or vape and other stressors that can impact the health of students," said [Harold Wimmer](#), president and CEO of the American Lung Association (ALA). "Students and staff spend a significant amount of time in school, so it is critical to their well-being and education that they are in the healthiest environment and are making the healthiest choices possible."

To that end, the ALA has created a youth initiative to help schools and caregivers address chronic lung issues like asthma, air quality and tobacco-free policies. The initiative offers information, guides and sample policies that can be implemented in schools to protect students and staff.

The group is also working to educate parents, students and school officials in four key areas of lung health:

- **Asthma:** There are 6.1 million kids under the age of 18 living with asthma, a leading cause of missed school days. The ALA has in-depth resources for parents, [young adults](#) and schools on managing asthma, including a free online course for school personnel who administer asthma medications and seek to understand and implement quick-relief [stock asthma medication laws](#), policies or programs.
- **Tobacco Use:** A new school year can also mean peer pressure increases to vape or smoke. According to the 2023 National Youth Tobacco Survey, more than 2 million middle and [high school students](#) reported that they had used e-cigarettes in the last 30 days. The ALA has resources to prevent [tobacco use](#) and help youth quit, specifically designed for schools, parents and teens.
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Indoor Air Quality: Some breathing hazards are not as obvious, like [indoor air pollution](#) and greenhouse gas emissions. Poor air quality in schools can affect student, teacher and staff's attention, thinking and ability to learn. The ALA offers a free downloadable guide on how school administrators can improve their [indoor air quality](#).



Infectious Respiratory Diseases and Vaccinations: A new school year means new friends, new teachers and sometimes, new viruses, so students need to practice good health hygiene habits and get recommended vaccinations, including influenza and COVID-19 shots.

More information: The American Academy of Pediatrics has more [back-to-school tips](#).

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