Environmental Tips

There are irritants in the environment that may make breathing more difficult. Some can be avoided and some cannot. Become aware of irritants and avoid or limit your exposure.

Smoking
Smoke from tobacco products irritates the lining in your lungs. Mucus is produced, which may plug your lungs. In time, this leads to infection and may cause permanent lung damage. Avoid secondhand smoke and if you smoke, stop. Emphysema and bronchitis are largely diseases of smokers. No matter how long you have smoked, coughing and sputum may decrease when you quit.

Humidity
If you live in a humid area and have mildew or mold in the house, you may want to dehumidify your home. Air conditioning will do this, or you can use a dehumidifier. If your house is too dry, it can dry out the mucus linings of your airways. Use a humidifier to add moisture to the air.

Pollution
Watch for air quality alerts. These alerts are issued when there is potential for high pollution levels. People with lung disease need to stay inside to limit exposure to unhealthy air. Smoke from tobacco products is another form of pollution. Ask your family and friends not to smoke around you.

Aerosol sprays
Aerosol sprays, such as room fresheners, deodorants and oven cleaners, pollute the air in your home. Breathing in these products is irritating to your lungs. These products linger in the air making them hard to avoid. Substitute aerosol spray in your home for products that can be poured or rubbed.

Fumes
Avoid fumes that may irritate your lungs. Ventilate your cooking stove by turning on the exhaust fan or opening a nearby window to draw the cooking fumes out of the house.

Dust
Avoid activities that raise dust, such as sweeping, dusting, driving on dirt roads and mowing grass. If you must get involved in a dusty job, wear a scarf or handkerchief over your nose and mouth or buy a surgical mask to wear. This helps to filter the air that you inhale. Also, regularly clean filters in air conditioners and furnaces.

Extremely cold weather
Cold air can irritate the bronchial tubes and cause coughing. When you go outdoors in very cold weather (less than 40 degrees Fahrenheit), breathe through a scarf or handkerchief held over your nose. This will help warm the air as it enters your lungs.