

**REVIEWED**

Heat Waves

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# Why you need an air purifier during a heat wave

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Reviewed

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Oppressive and dangerous heat waves have been sweeping the nation—several cities even broke heat records over the weekend, such as Boston with a new daily record high temperature. While the Northeast is finally experiencing some relief from the heat today, the heat on the west coast is still going strong. Across the Atlantic, several countries in Europe are dealing with a heat wave of their own. Heat waves aren't only dangerous because of the scorching temperatures they bring, but also because of the decrease in air quality that comes along with them. As extreme heat events are expected to become more frequent, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), now's a good time to take action so that you are more comfortable during heat spells such as this. Here's how to improve the air quality in your home amid record-breaking heat waves.

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## What is a heat wave?

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) defines a heat wave as a period of at least two days in which temperatures rise higher than a given area's historical

average. Heat waves are caused by high-pressure air systems forcing air downward, trapping hot air near the ground and preventing rain that would cool the area from forming. While they're decidedly less flashy than other severe weather phenomena such as tornadoes and hurricanes, heat waves are one of the deadliest forms of severe weather with an average of 1,300 people in the U.S. dying annually due to extreme heat-related circumstances such as heart attack or respiratory diseases.

## How heat waves impact air quality

Extreme heat during a heat wave can lead to poor air quality for several reasons. For one, heat waves can increase the likelihood of wildfires due to the hot and dry conditions they create. With wildfires comes irritants such as smoke and soot that are harmful to the lungs when ingested, particularly if an individual has pre-existing conditions such as asthma. Heat waves can have a negative effect on air quality even without wildfires. If you'll recall, heat waves tend to keep the air at ground level. One effect this has is keeping ozone, one of the main components of smog (a fog of polluted air) at ground level. Furthermore, heat waves naturally lead to an increase in air conditioner and electricity usage, which increases the production of other types of pollutants such as carbon dioxide.

## What does an air purifier do

Fortunately, you needn't be at the mercy of the pollutants floating in the air in your home. There are several different types of technologies used in air purifiers that can protect you from irritants that would otherwise trigger allergies and other ailments. Air purifiers can remove particles as large as dust, mold and pollen, as well as particles as small as viruses and bacteria depending on the type of filter being used. They aren't just helpful during times of severe weather, as increasingly common as that may be, but for day-to-day life as well. For example, air purifiers can even eliminate pet fur and cleaning chemicals. Studies show that air purifiers have a positive effect on personal health due to the filtering of air pollutants, which is particularly notable for people with allergies and asthma.

## The best air purifier to improve air quality

We've tested many different air purifiers here at Reviewed to see how quickly and efficiently they can clear air pollutants. Additionally, we've assessed their looks, ease of use and the cost of replacing filters. Based on these parameters, we found the Winix 5500-2 to be the best

filter on the market. It's easy to use, inexpensive to maintain and, most importantly, has a combination of filters that remove many different types of particles and chemicals. The pre-filter eliminates large particles such as fur, while a carbon filter absorbs chemical pollutants like cleaning products. A HEPA filter stops microscopic particles and a plasma filter further breaks down chemical pollutants. The Winix also comes with nifty features such as an automatic sensor that adjusts performance based on current air quality and a light sensor that dims the controls when it gets dark.

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