

Are Air Purifiers a Game-Changer or a Hidden Concern for Pets?

Using an air purifier can improve indoor air quality for both you and your pets, but it's essential to choose a safe and reliable model. Here's what you need to know.

STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- Air purifiers can improve indoor air quality by trapping pollutants, allergens and airborne particles, which is beneficial for both humans and pets in the home
- Avoid ozone-generating air purifiers and ionizers, as they produce harmful ozone and volatile organic compounds that can cause respiratory irritation and health issues for pets and humans
- HEPA and activated carbon filters are recommended for pets and humans, as they effectively remove 99.97% of airborne pollutants and pet dander, as well as eliminate unpleasant odors from the home
- When installing an air purifier, consider your pet's safety by positioning the device securely and being mindful of air current and noise levels that might distress your animal companions
- Not all air purifiers are created equal; choose a mechanical filtration model that safely removes harmful particles while protecting your pets from potential electrical or physical hazards

The quality of your indoor air matters, especially if you consider how much time you spend inside your living space. The problem is that there are many sources in your home that can affect your air quality, such as mold, smoke, cigarette smoke, asbestos and carbon monoxide. And just as these unseen contaminants can harm you, they can severely affect your pet, too.

Hence, many people resort to buying a reliable air purifier to improve their air quality. But are air purifiers really a good investment, or could they worsen the problem? Here's what to consider before getting an air purifier for your home.

What Are Air Purifiers Used for?

As their name implies, air purifiers are machines that are designed to purify and clean the air inside your home. They work by trapping unwanted pollutants and airborne particles, including pet dander and hair. Some can even absorb bad odors. Whether you share your home with a pet or not, this device can add an extra layer of cleanliness to your home.¹

If someone in your household struggles with allergies, air purifiers can be an added boon, as they can help extract fur and dander, which are particularly problematic as they can trigger sneezing, itchy eyes and other allergic symptoms. However, take note that not all allergens can be removed by air purifiers, although they can be helpful.

Air purifiers come in various designs, shapes and sizes; some are small enough to put on your desktop, while others are large free-standing models. However, not all air purifiers are safe for pets; there are certain types you must steer clear of.

Avoid These Types of Air Purifiers (Whether You Have a Pet or Not)

You've probably heard of ozone-emitting "purifiers," but beware — these are not a good fit for your pets, especially pet birds. Ozone generators convert oxygen into ozone to destroy mold, mildew, fungi, bacteria, and viruses.

However, at high levels, ozone can be very potent and reactive, leading to side effects. In pet birds, ozone damages their respiratory system, reduces immune function and increases physical stress.² According to the pet website Catster:

*"Think of ozone as air bleach. It may be able to clean the air of contaminants, but it is not harmless to humans or animals. Exposure to ozone can cause eye and nose irritation, cough, shortness of breath, and exacerbate chronic respiratory illnesses. These machines are banned in some places, so it's best to avoid them altogether, even if you don't have pets."*³

Ionizers are another type of ozone-producing technology you must beware of. Using ionization technology, these purifiers generate high voltage energy to produce negative ions that attract particles and make them too heavy to stay airborne.

However, this process causes ionizers to ozone, although in fewer quantities than ozone generators. "Ozone is also harmful to people, so this is why CARB requires ozone output of air purifiers to be no more than 0.05 ppm.," RabbitAir reports.⁴

What's more, the process creates other chemicals like ethanol or acetones, which are known as oxygenated volatile organic compounds (VOCs). Being exposed to these chemicals can lead to side effects like irritation to the eyes, nose and throat.⁵

The Recommended Air Purifier if You Have Pets

Ideally, you should select an air purifier that uses mechanical air filtration, as it is the safest option for your pet. Find one that uses high-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) and activated carbon filters.⁶

HEPA filters trap harmful particles like pet dander, dust mites, and tobacco smoke by forcing air through a fine mesh. Many pet owners consider this a must-have in their home, especially since pets shed ultrafine particles like fur and dander.

*"[HEPA] filter[s] can eliminate 99.97% of airborne pollutants in your home, including particles as small as 0.3 microns. For comparison's sake, the diameter of a human hair is 70 microns," Catster explains.*⁷

Meanwhile, activated carbon filters help control and eliminate odors from your home. Carbon filters also help get rid of VOCs like carbon monoxide, benzene and formaldehyde, which are harmful to both humans and pets.⁸

Reminders When Installing an Air Purifier in Your Home

As long as you purchase the correct type that's safe for your family, including your pets, a high-quality air purifier is a great investment for your home. As with other appliances and electrical equipment in your home, you must make sure to position the air purifier in a place where it cannot be knocked over or your pet will not become entangled or trapped in the electrical cord.

The good news is that most air purifiers in the market are well-designed to protect the internal mechanisms from small children, keeping their safety in mind; hence, they are safe from your pets' wagging tails and prying paws.

Consider the air current and noise being emitted by the machine as well, as some pets may be sensitive to them. According to LiveScience:

*"Most air purifiers use fans to draw air in from the outside and pass it through one or more filters. Once the air is purified, it gets forcefully expelled back into the atmosphere, emitting noise that can range from a low-level 40dB (comparable to a home computer) to a loud and uncomfortable 70dB (the sound of a vacuum cleaner operating at full strength). Loud sounds that are also high-pitched and intermittent can be particularly distressing for dogs."*⁹

Sources and References

^{1,9} [LiveScience, November 15, 2024.](#)

^{2,4} [RabbitAir, Are Air Purifiers Safe for Pets?](#)

^{3,5,7} [Catster, September 2, 2024.](#)

⁶ [House Fresh, Are air purifiers safe for pets?](#)

⁸ [Sanuvox, Are Air Purifiers Safe for Pets?](#)
