



Breathe better, work smarter: Indoor Air Quality tips for remote workers

Since the rise of remote work—especially after the COVID-19 pandemic—millions have turned their homes into permanent workspaces. While it may feel safer and more comfortable than an office, working from home presents a hidden risk: poor indoor air quality (IAQ).

IAQ isn't just about comfort—it affects your focus, mood, energy levels, and long-term health. If you've ever felt foggy, tired, or unmotivated by mid-afternoon, your air might be partly to blame.

What's in the air you're breathing?

Spending over 90% of our time indoors (EPA, 2021), especially in closed spaces while working, increases exposure to pollutants like:





- Carbon dioxide (CO₂): Builds up in rooms with little ventilation, making you feel sluggish.
- Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs): Released by paints, cleaning products, and air fresheners.
- Particulate Matter (PM2.5 and PM10): Tiny particles from dust, smoke, and even your pets.
- Mould and allergens: Thrive in damp, unventilated corners.
- Cleaning chemicals: Common in sprays and scented products.

These pollutants don't just irritate your lungs—they affect how you think and feel.

Why IAQ matters for your brain:

- Lower focus & slower thinking: CO₂ levels above 1000 ppm can reduce attention, memory, and mental speed (Allen et al., 2016).
- Mental fatigue & stress: High PM2.5 levels lead to quicker exhaustion and low motivation (Ferreira & Barros, 2022).
- Worse decision-making: Poor ventilation raises cortisol, making it harder to plan or prioritise (Manu et al., 2024).
- Long-term health risks: Chronic exposure can lead to headaches, breathing issues, and reduced well-being (WHO, 2021).

Five easy ways to improve your home office air

Tip	What to do	Why it works
 Ventilate often	Open windows for 10–15 minutes each hour	Reduces CO ₂ and refreshes the air (<i>Allen et al., 2016</i>)
 Use air purifiers	Place them in rooms where you spend the most time, especially in urban areas or homes with pets	Removes particles and allergens (<i>WHO, 2021</i>)
 Add air-purifying plants	Add low-maintenance plants like pothos or snake plant	Absorbs VOCs and improves oxygen (<i>Wolverton et al., 1989</i>)
 Ditch strong chemicals	Clean with natural products like vinegar or baking soda instead of heavily scented cleaners	Avoids releasing VOCs (<i>Ferreira & Barros, 2022</i>)

Final takeaway

Good air = better work.

Air quality isn't a luxury—it's essential for clear thinking, emotional balance, and productivity. By making a few simple changes, you can create a home workspace that supports your health, brainpower, and overall well-being.

So next time you open your laptop, crack open a window too—you might just breathe new life into your day.