

Car idling, air pollution and health impacts

Leaving your car engine idling while parked fills the air both outside and inside the vehicle with **exhaust pollutants**.

These are harmful for people of all ages, but especially children, pregnant women and older people. Pets are harmed too.



Nitrogen dioxide (NO₂)

NO₂ is a poisonous gas mainly caused by **motor engine exhausts**.

When inhaled, NO₂ causes airway inflammation, asthma, respiratory infections and reduced lung function.



Particulate matter (PM)

PM are tiny particles over 5 times smaller than a human hair. Produced mainly by **solid fuel burning, brakes and tyre wear** and exhaust emissions.

PM causes asthma, higher risks of heart and lung diseases, cancer and diabetes.



Protect Good Health

Air pollution causes **1,400 premature deaths** in Ireland every year. Everyone is affected, but **children** are among the **most vulnerable** to air pollution (see the image on the right).

The Asthma Society of Ireland reports that **1 in 10 Irish children currently have asthma** [1,2], one of the highest rates worldwide. Respiratory conditions lead to increased school absences and poorer academic performance.

Turning off car engines outside schools is a crucial step to protect the health of children and adults in the school community, whether they walk, cycle or are driven to and from school.

Sources: [1] [2]

Children and teenagers are more susceptible to air pollution



Developing lungs and organs



Weaker immune system



They take in more polluted air than adults



Faster breathing rate



More mouth breathing



Height closer to car fumes



Spend more time outdoors

Air pollution can cause multiple short- & long-term health impacts



Low birth weight



Asthma, allergies and reduced lung function



Respiratory infections and diseases



Stress and poor mental health

6 reasons for turning your vehicle engine off outside schools

#SwitchOffTheEngine

START

1

SWITCHING OFF THE ENGINE KEEPS THE AIR INSIDE THE CAR HEALTHY

Fumes from engine idling form a cloud of pollution around the vehicle. This pollution can enter the car and make air inside the cabin up to 12 times worse than that outside [1].

Switch off the engine to remove pollution risks for drivers and passengers.

2

LEAVING THE ENGINE RUNNING IS NOT NEEDED TO KEEP THE CAR WARM

A car typically stays warm for 30-60 minutes after the engine is turned off, giving plenty of time to drop off or pick up a child.

Why not bring a coat to stay warm?

3

TURNING OFF CAR ENGINES PROMOTES BETTER MENTAL HEALTH

Studies have linked exposure to traffic air pollution with a 20% higher risk of stress, anxiety and poor mental health [2].

Keeping engines off outside schools contributes to children and adults' happiness.

4

A SWITCHED OFF ENGINE SAVES YOU MONEY

Engine idling wastes fuel and costs money. Restarting a petrol or diesel engine uses less fuel than it would consume idling for 10 seconds [3].

Keeping the engine off while parked is good for your health and for your wallet.

5

SWITCHING THE ENGINE OFF FIGHTS CLIMATE CHANGE

Idling cars produce carbon dioxide, the main contributor to global warming and climate change, which harms our health and wellbeing.

Avoiding idling for just 3 minutes every day of the year would reduce CO₂ emissions by 1.4 million tonnes annually – the equivalent of taking 320,000 cars off the road [4].

6

REDUCING CAR IDLING OUTSIDE SCHOOLS WORKS!

Research shows that school anti-idling initiatives are successful in decreasing air pollutants outside schools [5].

Everyone can play their part to keep air healthy for the whole school community.

FINISH