



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte
Health Service Executive

Ár Sláinte



CORK & KERRY HEALTH & WELLBEING UPDATE from HSE South, Health Promotion & Improvement

Welcome to this special issue of the **Ár Sláinte** e-zine, dedicated to the **importance of clean air outside schools for the health of children and adults**

Promoting healthy air outside Schools

Did you know?
Vehicle engine idling (i.e., leaving the car or bus engine on while parked) **outside schools** worsens the quality of the air and **harms everyone's health**



Picture Used with the kind permission of Idling Action London and The Mayor of London <https://idlingaction.london/privacy>.

Learn the facts & take action

Read on to learn the **6 reasons for switching off vehicle engines** outside schools, and **what idling does to yours and your children's health & wellbeing**

A short guide on car engine idling and health

September 2024

Created by the UCC [BehaviAir](#) with the HSE Health Promotion Schools Team, Cork Healthy Cities and Cork City Council. With thanks to school teachers and parents for their input

BEHAV-I-AIR



6 reasons for turning vehicle engines off outside schools

1

SWITCHING OFF THE ENGINE KEEPS THE AIR INSIDE THE CAR HEALTHY

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

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

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.

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. Bring a coat to stay warm!

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].

3

TURNING OFF CAR ENGINES PROMOTES BETTER MENTAL HEALTH

Studies have linked exposure to traffic air pollution with about 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.

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** that are harmful for people of all ages and pets, but especially children, pregnant women and older people.



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 misuse, tyre wear, and exhausts**.

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 graphic on the right).

The Asthma Society of Ireland reports that **1 in 10 Irish children currently have asthma¹**, one of the highest 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.

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

¹ <https://www.asthma.ie/get-help/resources/facts-figures-asthma>

² <https://www.mdpi.com/1660-4601/8/8/3192>

Resources for parents/caregivers and school communities

Learn & Share

Read more about **air quality** in Cork City and Ireland

Understand how **air pollution** affects **health** (WHO)

Talk to others about the **health risks** of car idling

Take action



If driving to school, park the car and **get out to socialise** or **take a brief walk** while waiting. Good for your health and for the air :)



Use the **Green Schools no-idling toolkit** in your school



Create a **school no-idling zone**



Join the **EPA GLOBE project** to monitor school air quality

Engage with the **BehaviAir** initiative



Celebrate **Clean Air Day** at your school

For any questions, you can contact:

- BehaviAir Team: behaviair@gmail.com, X: @BehaviAir, Facebook: BehaviAir Air-Quality
- HSE Health Promotion Schools Team, 021 4921641