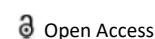




COMMENTARY



Air Pollution and its Effect on Human Health

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Description

Air pollution is the contamination of air caused by the presence of substances in the atmosphere that are harmful to human and other living beings' health, as well as to the environment and materials. Gases (such as ammonia, carbon monoxide, sulphur dioxide, nitrous oxides, methane, carbon dioxide, and chlorofluorocarbons), particulates (both organic and inorganic), and biological molecules are all examples of air pollutants. Both human activity and natural processes have the potential to generate pollution. A number of pollution-related diseases, such as respiratory infections, heart disease, COPD, stroke, and lung cancer, are all linked to air pollution. Air pollution may be linked to lower IQ scores, impaired cognition, an increased risk of psychiatric disorders like depression, and poor perinatal health, according to growing evidence. Poor air quality has a wide range of health consequences for humans, but it primarily affects the respiratory and cardiovascular systems. Individual responses to air pollutants are influenced by the type of pollutant, the degree of exposure, as well as the person's health and genetics. Outdoor air pollution alone is responsible for 2.1 to 4.21 million deaths per year, making it one of the leading causes of death. Overall, air pollution kills around 7 million people each year, resulting in a global mean Loss of Life Expectancy (LLE) of 2.9 years, and is the world's most serious environmental health threat. In the 2008 Blacksmith Institute World's Worst Polluted Places report, indoor air pollution and poor urban air quality are listed as two of the world's worst toxic pollution problems. The scale of the air pollution crisis is massive: 90% of the world's population breathes polluted air to some extent. Despite the

serious health consequences, the problem is frequently handled in a haphazard manner.

Exposure to three components of air pollution, fine particulate matter, nitrogen dioxide, and ozone, correlates with cardiac and respiratory illness even at levels lower than those considered safe by US regulators. Breathing difficulties, wheezing, coughing, asthma, and worsening of existing respiratory and cardiac conditions are all possible health effects of air pollution. Increased medication use, increased doctor or emergency department visits, more hospital admissions, and premature death are all possible outcomes of these effects. Poor air quality has a wide range of health consequences for humans, but it primarily affects the respiratory and cardiovascular systems. Individual responses to air pollutants are influenced by the type of pollutant, the degree of exposure, as well as the person's health and genetics. Particulates, ozone, nitrogen dioxide, and sulphur dioxide are the most common sources of air pollution. In terms of total deaths due to indoor and outdoor air pollution, children under the age of five years in developing countries are the most vulnerable. Air pollution is typically concentrated in densely populated urban areas, particularly in developing countries where cities are rapidly growing and environmental regulations are lax or nonexistent. In fast-growing tropical cities, urbanization causes a rapid rise in premature mortality due to anthropogenic air pollution. However, even densely populated areas in developed countries, such as Los Angeles and Rome, can suffer from unhealthy levels of pollution. While smoking is still the most common cause of lung cancer in China, the number of smokers is decreasing while lung cancer rates are increasing.