

1) HEALTH IMPACT

What sort of health problems can pollution cause?

According to the World Health Organization, a third of deaths from stroke, lung cancer and heart disease can be linked to air pollution.

Some of the effects of air pollution on the body are not understood, but pollution may increase inflammation which narrows the arteries leading to heart attacks or strokes.

As well as this, almost one in 10 lung cancer cases in the UK are caused by air pollution.

Particulates find their way into the lungs and get lodged there, causing inflammation and damage. As well as this, some chemicals in particulates that make their way into the body can cause cancer.

Deaths from pollution

Around seven million people die prematurely because of air pollution every year. Pollution can cause a number of issues including asthma attacks, strokes, various cancers and cardiovascular problems.

Asthma triggers

Air pollution can cause problems for asthma sufferers for a number of reasons. Pollutants in traffic fumes can irritate the airways, and particulates can get into your lungs and throat and make these areas inflamed.

Problems in pregnancy

Women exposed to air pollution before getting pregnant are nearly 20 per cent more likely to have babies with birth defects, research suggested in January 2018.

Living within 3.1 miles (5km) of a highly-polluted area one month before conceiving makes women more likely to give birth to babies with defects such as cleft palates or lips, a study by University of Cincinnati found.

For every 0.01mg/m³ increase in fine air particles, birth defects rise by 19 per cent, the research adds.

Previous research suggests this causes birth defects as a result of women suffering inflammation and 'internal stress'.

2) WHAT IS BEING DONE TO TACKLE AIR POLLUTION?