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High risk of asthma, cardiac trouble

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New Delhi: The United Nations report about the increasing air pollution in Asia has put the spotlight on the immediate effect of the haze on health of people. In fact, experts say Delhiites should take all necessary precautions.

It is a known fact that asthma cases increase drastically during winter due to the presence of smog. But experts say that in the last five years there has been a cumulative increase of 20% in asthma cases. Not just asthma, even cardiovascular events shoot up due to smog.

"Asthma cases definitely shoot up. Chronic bronchitis, lower respiratory tract infection like pneumonia etc are also reported in large numbers during this time of the season. The pollutants in the air result in inflamma-

tion of airways, thereby blocking it. Children and elderly people stand a high chance of suffering an asthma attack or a serious episode of bronchitis," said Dr GC Khilnani, professor

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medicine, AIIMS.

There are some heavy metals in the air that can trigger allergic reactions. Throat and eye infections are very common. "There are micro-particles of dust and salts in the air that act as irritants

and can trigger an allergic reaction. Along with these micro-particles there are various gases like nitrogen oxide, carbon dioxide, carbon monoxide etc. A cocktail of all these can have a devastating effect on health. Due to smog, a lot of people complain about burning sensation in eyes or bad throat, sneezing etc," said Dr Sanjeev Bagai, director and head of the paediatrics department, Rockland hospital.

For asthma patients, driving in the city becomes even more difficult, especially at traffic signals. In fact, newborns too stand a chance of developing breathing difficulty. "The asthma episodes are frequent in those who travel a lot, especially during rush hour, as the pollution level is really high. But newborns are at greater risk of developing breathing diffi-

culty. We see a lot of newborns who are re-admitted at the hospital with such serious conditions," said Dr Bagai.

Doctors say the pollution levels have gone up so drastically that one inhales all poisonous substances while breathing. The pollutants enter our body through the respiratory tract and mixes with the blood, thereby, making it more viscous, which in turn puts a person at risk of having a serious cardiovascular event. "As blood becomes viscous due to these suspended particles, it increases the blood pressure. It also exerts pressure on fat deposits in the arteries, which can burst under excess pressure," said Dr Rajat Mohan, senior consultant, interventional cardiologist, Sir Ganga Ram Hospital.

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