

# Air pollution & young lives



Our Air,  
My Lungs

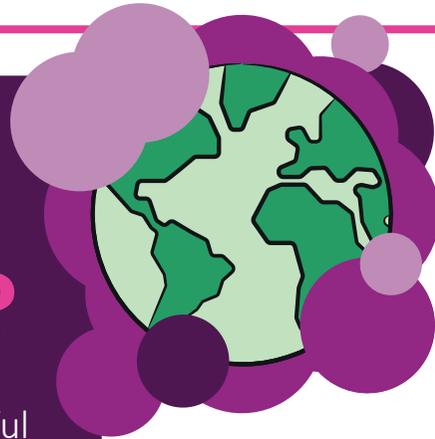
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## What is air pollution?

Air pollution is caused by harmful particles, chemicals and gases released into the air that we breathe in every day. Some particles are small enough to pass from the lungs into the bloodstream, causing damaging health effects.

### Did you know?

Most particles are smaller than the width of a human hair.



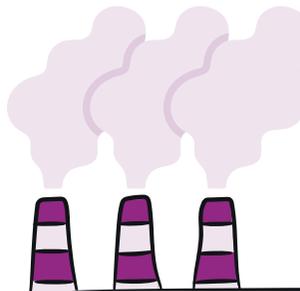
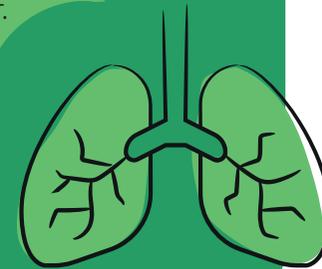
## How can it affect children and babies?

Compared to adults:

- Their airways are smaller- making infections more common.
- They breathe twice as fast- taking in more polluted air.
- They are closer to the level of car exhaust pipes.

Exposure to air pollution during childhood can cause long-lasting damage to their health, lung capacity and overall wellbeing as they grow older.

At a young age, lungs and natural body defences are still developing. This means they are more vulnerable to polluted air.



## Is it a problem?

1 in 4 UK residents live in areas with pollution levels more than twice the World Health Organization (WHO) upper limit.

Exposure to air pollution is linked with asthma, bronchitis and other respiratory infections and diseases.

It is thought that up to 43,000 deaths in the UK each year are caused by air pollution.

## What about during pregnancy?

Studies have shown a link between high levels of air pollution and:

- Infertility.
- Preterm delivery.
- Low birthweight.
- Still birth.



# Where does air pollution come from?



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## Outdoors

**Domestic** - Wood and coal burning



**Transport** - Cars, boats, planes and trains



**Did you know?**  
Air pollution levels can often be higher inside a car than outside.

**Factories** - Industrial processes and energy generation



**Building** - Construction and building sites



**Farming** - Crops and livestock



## Top Tips

If living in urban areas, try our simple steps to reduce children's exposure to air pollution:

- Walk rather than drive, if possible.
- Avoid the busiest times or take a quieter route.
- Walk on the inside of the pavement.
- Check the air pollution forecast.

## Indoors

Around 90% of the day is spent indoors, so it's important to create clean air environment at home too.

### Damp and mould

This grows in damp places due to leaking pipes and roofs, or condensation. The spores released can trigger allergic reactions in some people and breathing difficulties in others.

### Household appliances

Heating and cooking appliances in the home release pollutants into the air. If faulty, there is an added risk of them producing carbon monoxide; a harmful and poisonous gas which can make you seriously ill. Wood burners also have a negative effect on both health and the environment.

### Household and personal care products

Many everyday products, such as cleaning products, aerosols, paints and candles, release pollutants into their air. These include volatile organic compounds (VOCs) and particulate matter (PM).

### Smoking

Never smoke around babies and children as it can make them seriously unwell. Smoke lingers in a room for up to 2.5 hours on carpets, furnishings and walls.

## Top Tips

- Ventilation is key. Use an extractor fan or open windows when cooking, cleaning, bathing or drying laundry.
- Service boilers once a year by a gas safe engineer.
- Try chemical-free and allergy friendly products.
- Find low VOC labels on paints and other DIY materials.

Find out more:

