

WE TAKE THE AIR WE BREATHE FOR GRANTED.

Unless you're standing next to the back of a bus and smell or see the fumes that are coming out, you probably think that the air you breathe can't be that bad.

But in some areas, including in your home or other indoor areas, it can be. In fact, WHO (World Health Organisation) describe air pollution (both indoors and outdoors) as the "greatest environmental health risk in the world today".

WHAT IS AIR POLLUTION?

Generally, air pollution is known as material such as nitrogen oxide and sulphur dioxide gases or very, very small bits of dust-like solids (particulates) that have a harmful or damaging effect on humans and the environment, through disease or damage to food crops and animals.



DAILY AIR QUALITY INDEX (DAQI)

Outdoor air pollution is ranked on a scale from 1-10, with 1 being low, and 10 being very high. This is called the **Daily Air Quality Index**. This scale is also used to let people be aware of how they should handle any outdoor air pollution that might occur that day or the next, especially if they are **very young**,

very old, or prone to illnesses like asthma.



THE DAILY AIR QUALITY INDEX (DAQI) MEASURES 5 MAIN POLLUTANTS



(PM = particulate matter; tiny specs of dust much, much smaller than the width of one of your hairs, small enough to get into your lungs)



WHAT DOES IT DO

Asthma, lung cancer, heart disease and pneumonia are just some of the diseases that can be caused or made worse by air pollution.



So why is air pollution described as the **"greatest environmental health risk** in the world today"?

Well as you can imagine, breathing in fumes and little specs of dust-like particles into your lungs is not good for your health.

Here in the UK, there are many cities with nitrogen oxide ratings way above the WHO's safe levels.



In fact, if you breathe in dirty air over a long amount of time, **it can kill you**. According to WHO, 1 in 8 people die around the world breathing in polluted air. **Air pollution death rates are higher than deaths or injuries due to car accidents**.



Air pollution not only has an effect on the health of humans, but also animals, and damages food crops and the environment.



As we go about our days we can be exposed to different types of air pollution; outdoors and indoors.

Transport, or more specifically, traffic, is the main source of outdoor air pollution, with power stations.

Fuel-burning processes and even the methane produced by farting and burping cows and other livestock all adding to outdoor air pollution. **Carbon monoxide poisoning is a major problem in indoor pollution**, and happens when there is not enough ventilation indoors following the burning of charcoal or gas cooking and heating. Even air fresheners and cleaning products have the ability to negatively affect the air you breathe at home!

Indoor air pollution can also come from deep underground; radon is a radioactive gas that can come up from the earth and become trapped in buildings.

HOW DO WE STOP IT?

As transport and traffic are the biggest polluters, there are several changes that can be made in this area that can make a big change to our air quality.



It can be as simple as **turning off your car engine when stopped,** if there is enough time to do so, not at every traffic light! In fact, there are wardens





Some drivers in London also need to pay a daily charge for driving around the city if their cars don't meet European emissions standards.



The use of cleaner energy sources such as wind, solar and nuclear have been adopted by many countries looking to clean up their air, both inside and outside. Cleaner electricity generation could lead to the uptake in electric vehicles too, another low emission transport solution.



And there's always the old fashioned way or keeping air pollution down in transport; **walk or cycle everywhere!**

Capturing the carbon dioxide and methane that is given off during some fuel burning plants, industrial processes and waste sites could go a long way in preventing greenhouse gases and other pollutants from affecting our air quality.



Thankfully, more and more countries are turning away from the use of coal as an energy source, however there are still many areas where, for now, this is the only energy source they can afford or have access to.



Again, London is bringing in measures to alert people who live there about times and days when there is going to be high levels of pollution. There will be notices at bus stops, tube stations and on road signs.

And that's one of the most important things about air pollution. Often we cannot see it, so being more aware of it and the damages it can have on us and the environment means we're one step closer to thinking of ways of making sure it doesn't get any worse.

