

Outdoor Air Pollution Classified as Major Environmental Contributor to Fatal Cancer by IARC



The International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC), the dedicated cancer agency of the World Health Organisation, has in a recent statement classified outdoor air pollution as carcinogenic to humans.

The IARC Monographs Programme gathered the world's foremost experts in order to review the latest 1000 scientific papers from studies on five continents. Following their evidence evaluation it was concluded that exposure to outdoor air pollution is a cause of lung cancer. Furthermore, a positive association with a higher risk of bladder cancer was also noted.

The IARC discovered that the risk of lung cancer was proportionally increasing with a rise in the levels of exposure to air pollution, and despite the fact that air pollution's composition and humans' exposure to it varied greatly between locations across the world these findings were validated to apply globally.

In the past air pollution has already been named as a key contributor to a number of respiratory and heart diseases, and with large populations living in countries experiencing fast paced industrialization it is the exposure levels that have increased dramatically.

Data published recently highlights that in 2010 almost one quarter of a million lung cancer deaths were attributed to air pollution.

Dr Kurt Straif, Head of the IARC Monographs Section, confirms that a combination of cancer-causing matter is present in the air that we breathe, making outdoor air pollution not just a significant health risk in general, but more specifically a major environmental cause of cancer deaths.

The IARC Monographs Programme, nicknamed "encyclopaedia of carcinogens", offers an accurate and reliable resource of scientific evidence on substances and exposures known to cause cancer. Previous work includes studies on a number of individual chemicals and particular mixtures occurring in outdoor air pollution, including diesel engine fumes, metals, dust and solvents. This announcement classifies outdoor air pollution as a cause of cancer for the very first time.

"Our task was to evaluate the air everyone breathes rather than focus on specific air pollutants," explains Dr Dana Loomis, Deputy Head of the Monographs Section, adding that the findings from the reviewed studies all highlight the same outcome, namely that increased exposure to air pollution raises the risk of developing lung cancer.

Predominant causes of outdoor air pollution include transportation, industrial and agricultural emissions, residential heating and cooking and stationary power generation, with several air pollutants also having natural sources.

Dr Christopher Wild, IARC Director, stresses that the classification of outdoor air pollution as carcinogenic to humans represents an important step. He hopes this publication will send a strong signal to the international community that immediate action is needed in the implementation of ways to reduce pollution.

The summary evaluation can be viewed on the [IARC's website](#).

Source: [IARC](#)

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