

Delhi air choking our kids' lungs

weakest lungs as compared with those residing in other metros

By Mail Today Bureau in New Delhi

IT MAY be a shocker for many parents, but Delhi's children have the weakest lungs, as compared to kids from other metros. This has come to light from a study conducted by HEAL Foundation and Fresh Air Inc. that found that four out of every 10 kids in the Capital suffer from severe lung problems.

The study evaluates the lung health of school-going urban metro kids and to understand people's perception about air pollution.

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Poor lung capacity when under 10 per cent in Delhi. The worst affected are children who commute in unshielded vehicles as they are more exposed to dust particles in the air. In Delhi alone, about 16 per cent of children using open (unshielded) transport found 'Poor' lung health, compared to 11 per cent in Mumbai (CPT, 79 per cent, PT, 21 per cent), Bhubaneswar (CPT, 86 per cent, PT, 14 per cent) and Kolkata (CPT, 65 per cent, PT, 35 per cent).

While rising air pollution in the country poses serious health risks to all, it is more worrisome for children as their vital organs are immature enough to deal with it. This calls for an urgent need to make people's awareness



A study conducted by HEAL Foundation and Fresh Air Inc. has found that four out of every 10 Delhi kids suffer from severe lung problems.

SHOCKING STATS

THE LUNG CONDITION OF CHILDREN IN THE AGE GROUP OF 10-14 YEARS

	DELHI	MUMBAI	BANGALORE	KOLKATA
PASSING%	60%	73%	64%	65%
EXCELLENT	17%	8%	11%	10%
GOOD	19%	26%	17%	30%
SATISFACTORY	24%	39%	36%	25%
POOR	21%	13%	14%	9%

70% people with unshielded lung problems in Delhi think their lungs are healthy as they do not smoke and do not have any (or at least any) ailments.

The survey also indicates that only 10 per cent, 24 per cent, 37 per cent and also per cent people in Delhi, Mumbai, Bangalore and Kolkata, respectively think that they are responsible for current level of air pollution. As many as 61 per cent, 84 per cent, 67 per cent and 79 per cent people in the four metros think their participation and contribution will have either zero or negligible effect on air pollution. "The idea is to sensitize people and to educate them on making choices that help reduce air pollution and motivate them to make sure that the air they breathe is pure and clean," said Anil Arora, co-founder and co-chairman of the Delhi-based environmental NGO, Fresh Air. "We are Air India Movement Campaign," which will aim at educating, encouraging and motivating all stakeholders towards clean air.

Half of India's groundwater is poisonous



Groundwater in at least 307 districts has high nitrate levels.

By Akash Vashishtha in New Delhi

ALREADY grappling with the Gangs cleaning project, the government seems to have a bigger problem at hand as the groundwater in more than half of the country's districts contaminated with poisonous substances. The Central Ground Water Board (CGWB) has come up with a shocking assessment, according to which 278 districts have high levels of nitrates in their groundwater. At least 307 districts in 23 states of the country have nitrate above permissible levels and 67 areas have high arsenic content, which is a slow but deadly poison. The permissible levels of nitrates prescribed by Bureau of Indian Standards is 45 mg per litre of water. Groundwater exceeding the level was found across the country from Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka to Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand and West Bengal.

According to reports, heavy metals enter the groundwater; they cannot be removed. At best, they can be diluted but they remain stuck to the aquifers forever. "The report only reveals the utter failure of pollution boards and committees that have existed only in name during the past three decades. Lack of control on effluents, which have polluted the bodies as a whole, has resulted in this situation," environmentalist Manoj Kumar said. CGWB chairman S.A. Biswas said, "The measurement for arsenic, iron, cadmium and chromium in the report are point-specific. It is not that the whole of the district is given as an area-specific." In Haryana, the groundwater of Gurgaon, Faridkot, Rohtak, Panipat and Panchkula is contaminated. Significantly, the groundwater in 16 states has been detected with impermissibly high levels of nitrates. Water Resources Minister Uma Bharti could not be contacted for comment.

LUNG CONDITION OF KIDS BASED ON MODE OF TRANSPORT

	DELHI		MUMBAI		BANGALORE		KOLKATA	
	PT	UPT	PT	UPT	PT	UPT	PT	UPT
EXCELLENT	73%	27%	69%	31%	82%	18%	65%	35%
GOOD	79%	21%	62%	38%	73%	27%	60%	40%
SATISFACTORY	52%	48%	53%	47%	39%	61%	78%	21%
POOR	13%	87%	27%	73%	19%	81%	27%	73%
BAD	8%	92%	21%	79%	14%	86%	35%	65%

*PT- PACKED TRANSPORT (CLOSED VEHICLES)
*UPT- UNPACKED TRANSPORT (OPEN VEHICLES)

ADULTS ARE AT RISK TOO

The increasing level of particulate matter (PM 2.5) in the air is not only affecting the health of children, but also posing a risk to adults. PM 2.5 are tiny particles that reduce visibility and cause the air to appear hazy when the levels are elevated. Experts warn that the combination of PM 2.5 and ozone levels in the air is highly unhealthy for the people of Delhi. While PM 2.5 stays in the lungs and makes them more sensitive, ozone levels are more oxidative, cause irritation and can lead to asthma. "These levels in Delhi are extremely high. In such a scenario, people should always wear a mask when they open. They should protect themselves from not only the pollution outdoors, but also indoors that comes from carpets, windows, curtains and bedspreads," Kumar says. Environmentalist and Pulparip Business Centre CEO, Sibi Nigam, says, "Pollution has slow but definite impact on health. Carrying a mask has a must for people with a history of asthma. The pollution will have a slow but definite impact on the entire system of the people. The current scenario in Delhi is getting a worrying future. People are getting exposed to toxic air on daily basis," Dr J.C. Sanyal, HOD of pulmonology and sleep medicine, Sarvagya Hospital, said. The Delhi government has recently directed the deputy commissioners of all 22 districts to conduct surprise checks and report irregularities to track down on parking of garbage, plastic and leaves in open areas. Mail Today/Delhi

Minister finds silver lining in abduction

The Bihar Police got a major breakthrough in the abduction of a leading doctor and his wife from Gaya, but the state's Health Minister Manoj Kumar Singh says appropriate steps for the rescue will be taken. The doctor's name was not disclosed. Singh said it was a silver lining as the doctor was an extremely eminent person and the state government was making all efforts to rescue him. "Chief Minister Manoj Kumar Singh has taken appropriate steps for the rescue of the doctor," he said. The doctor's name was not disclosed. Singh said it was a silver lining as the doctor was an extremely eminent person and the state government was making all efforts to rescue him. "Chief Minister Manoj Kumar Singh has taken appropriate steps for the rescue of the doctor," he said.

Says at least doctor and wife are together

Minister Singh said that the doctor and his wife were together and were in good health. He said that the doctor's name was not disclosed. Singh said it was a silver lining as the doctor was an extremely eminent person and the state government was making all efforts to rescue him. "Chief Minister Manoj Kumar Singh has taken appropriate steps for the rescue of the doctor," he said.