Air pollution and your health

Dirty air is major cause of ill health and early death in our communities.

In towns and cities, road vehicles are the main source of air pollution.

This can contribute to a wide range of illnesses and conditions, including lung and heart diseases, some cancers, strokes and asthma too.

While more research is needed, recent studies have also linked poor air quality to dementia and thinking ability.

Who is at risk?

Air pollution affects everyone’s health, from birth to death.

Health damage caused by air pollution can begin as early as a baby’s first few weeks in the womb.

The impacts can be experienced at every stage of life and even contribute to an early death.

What happens when we breathe invisible gases, soot and fine particles deep into our lungs?

Just a few hours’ exposure to air pollution can irritate your eyes, nose and throat. But a few years’ can lead to you developing heart and lung disease.

And the most vulnerable in society are hit hardest – children, older people and those already in poor health.

Children’s lungs develop throughout their childhood. So children with asthma who are exposed to air pollution are likely to have more asthma attacks. And those attacks may be more severe.

If you already have a lung or heart condition, breathing in polluted air can make it worse. Even short-term exposure to air pollution can make lung conditions worse.

Everyone is at risk. But people who spend more time in areas with a high concentration of air pollution are most affected – which can include drivers.

Did you know?

- Air pollution contributes to the equivalent of 1,200 deaths a year in Greater Manchester.
- Air pollution is the largest environmental risk to public health in Greater Manchester.
- If we tackle the air pollution pumped out by vehicles, our children could live six months longer.
- The air you breathe inside your car can be worse than the air outside.
- The health and social care costs of air pollution in England could reach £5.3 billion by 2035 unless action is taken.
- Air pollution in Greater Manchester increases the chance of hospital admissions and trips to A&E.

More information and links are available at the GM Clean Air website https://cleanairgm.com/