

Fact Sheet

Air Pollution and Children's Health

The physiology of children makes them uniquely vulnerable to the type and degree of their exposure to air pollution.

Key Facts

Clean air is of special importance for children, since they breathe a greater volume of air relative to their body than adults, putting them at a greater risk of accumulating higher concentrations of pollutants in their bodies.

Around 300 million children currently live in areas where outdoor air pollution exceeds international guidelines by at least six times.

In total, around 2 billion children live in areas that exceed the World Health Organization annual limit of $10 \mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$. Almost one million children die from pneumonia each year, more than half of which are directly related to air pollution.

Millions more suffer from respiratory diseases that diminish their resilience and affect their physical and cognitive development.

Effects to children health

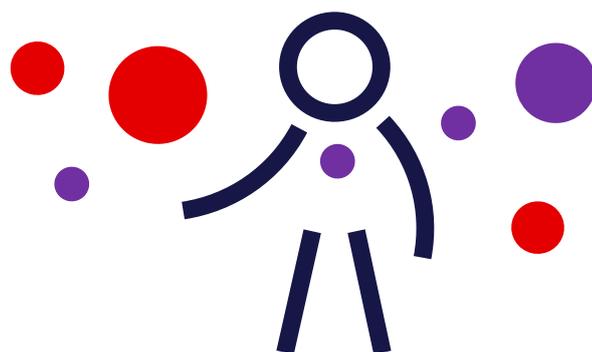
Air pollution is known to cause breathing problems, lung and heart diseases, such as asthma. Studies have shown that children are up to four times more likely to have significantly reduced lung function in adulthood if they live in highly polluted areas¹. Because of their size, children inhale more air per kilogram of body weight than adults. When air pollutants enter their body, they can:

- Have effects on various organs and systems.
- Make it harder to breathe, irritate lungs and airways.
- Make them cough, splutter, wheeze, sneeze, dizzy and can make eyes itch.
- Affect their immune system, so that they can catch infections more easily.
- Early life exposure to PM2.5 was associated with a reduction in fundamental cognitive abilities, including working memory and attention disorders.

What can you and your children do to protect their health?

- Check the Air Quality Index (AQI) in your area on airqualitykosova.rks-gov.net and ihmk-rks.net/ajri or download the **Air Quality in Kosovo** smartphone app by scanning the QR code below.
- Parents can play an important role in protecting their children from exposure to air pollution.
- Encourage a reduction in car use, especially for short distances.
- Teachers can choose not to go outside for physical education classes on smoggy days.
- Select the route to and from school wisely to avoid polluted areas.
- When air quality is good, walk or cycle to school; it is good exercise and reduces exposure to air pollution.
- Use public transport when possible to do so.
- Stay at home when air quality outside is poor.
- Improve & maintain good health and strengthen your immune system. Maintain a healthy diet with lots of fruit and vegetables.

For health related recommendations visit ajri.niph-rks.org



iOS



Android

Download the free smartphone app for real-time information on air pollution.

¹ https://www.unicef.org/publications/files/UNICEF_Clear_the_Air_for_Children_30_Oct_2016.pdf