

Deccan Chronicle
May 28

Exposure to air pollution can cause infertility
DECCAN CHRONICLE. | DURGA PRASAD SUNKU
Published May 28, 2018, 2:48 am IST
Updated May 28, 2018, 2:48 am IST

<https://www.deccanchronicle.com/lifestyle/health-and-wellbeing/280518/exposure-to-air-pollution-can-cause-infertility.html>

Hyderabad: After heart and respiratory diseases, inflammation and even strokes, pollution is found to be a reason for reduced conception rates and increased pregnancy losses.

Emissions of hydrocarbons, soot and chemicals released from vehicles and industries contribute to pollution along with dust from construction work sites. Continued exposure to pollutants can take a toll on the body.

Dr K. Shilpi Reddy, gynaecologist, said, "We can see increasing phenomenon of reduction in sperm count, sperm quality, egg count and egg quality among people who are living in urban areas as compared to rural areas."

She said infertility is a multifactorial problem. "These problems can be found in people who are suffering from obesity, who eat junk food and are exposed to radiation."

Compared to rural population, people in the urban areas are more exposed to air pollution.

Some of the other problems caused by exposure to air pollution are irregular heartbeats, development of chronic bronchitis, irritation of the eyes, nose and throat, shortness of breath, coughing and tightness in the chest.

Dr Vimee Bindra, gynaecologist, said, "It is usually difficult to correlate air pollution as the reason for any particular problem. But we can say that it is a contributing factor. Exposure to polluted air may lead to miscarriage, low birth and intrauterine death."

The conditions in which people live, apart from the surrounds, play a major role. Dr M.S.S. Mukherjee, cardiologist, said, "One study states that people who are living near highways are more affected by heart problems. People who are living in cities are more affected as opposed to those who live in rural areas, and the reason is air pollution."

He said the pollutants contain oxidants, which oxidizes low-density lipoprotein (LDL) in the blood and these form blocks in blood vessels.

Sulphur dioxide is a main component of the emission from vehicles, which causes respiratory problems. There are studies which say that by controlling air pollution, the lung performance can be improved.

Dr Sai Praveen Haranath, pulmonologist, said, "It is impossible to detect an individual case where air pollution is the reason behind lung problems because they are also other factors which play a role like smoking tobacco. But we can safely assume that one out of every five persons suffer from asthma is because of air pollution."

Apart from physical health, pollution also has an impact on mental health. So much so that a doctor compared air pollution to consuming alcohol.

Dr Diana Monteiro, psychologist, said, "During very hot conditions people tend to behave violently, get angry and are irritated. It is like taking alcohol. If we consume it we behave differently because of the chemicals present in alcohol. The same scenario can be applied to air pollution."

While people are advised to take measures against pollution, experts say that urban planning plays a key role in reducing pollution.

"City planning should be done by keeping in mind the wind direction which is currently not happening due to increase concretisation. The government should remove encroachments mercilessly," said environmentalist Subba Rao.

He said the city is expected to have 20 square metres open space per person which is the national average. "Hyderabad has only 2 sq. m. open space per person. We are not looking at the root cause," Mr Rao said.

Officials say air pollution in the state is low compared to other states and the country average.

Pollution Control Board senior scientist P. Veerana said "Air pollution in Telangana especially Hyderabad is very low compared to the national scenario. We are taking measures like encouraging electric and CNG vehicles, constructing Metro Rail and offering multi-level parking. We are trying to introduce BS VI engines."