Preventing the harmful effects of air pollution

Tackling air pollution at its source is the most effective way of preventing the harmful effects. Action by cities as well as by national and international policy makers is essential to promote effective multi-sectoral solutions such as cleaner transport, more efficient energy production and waste management.

Communities and individuals have powerful roles to reduce their own contribution to air pollution and by adopting daily habits to stay healthy and minimize exposure.

Reduce your own contribution to air pollution levels

- Do not use wood burning stoves, candles, and incense as these will all add to air pollution levels by producing particulate matter.
- Stop use of cigarettes and other tobacco products as these will also add to air pollution as well as other adverse health effects.
- Reduce unnecessary travel by cars, scooters and other motorized vehicles. This will not only prevent additional personal exposure but it will prevent adding to already high pollution levels for others.
- Do not burn leaves, garbage, crop residue, plastic or other materials. Burning these materials adds greatly to local pollution levels. In residential areas this is particularly hazardous.
- Conserve energy by turning of lights and electronics when not being used.

Minimize exposure

- Find out the nearest pollution monitoring station in your neighbourhood and websites where the levels of air pollution are published and follow any advice from local authorities to guide your planned activities.
- Keep rooms inside homes clean. Wet mopping and dusting is preferable to sweeping or vacuuming (unless your vacuum has a High-efficiency particulate arrestance (HEPA) filter) as these can stir up additional dusts and particles.
- Create a clean room for sleeping particularly for young children and the elderly. A good choice would be one with few windows and doors.
- Keep windows and doors closed.
- Run an air conditioner or air purifier or a central air conditioning system if you are certain your air conditioner does not draw air from outdoors and has an appropriate filter.
- Avoid heavy traffic during peak times and keep windows closed.

Finally and most importantly visit your family doctor or health clinic if you are feeling unwell.