Indoor air pollution

Indoor air pollution is the term used to describe exposure to certain substances found in homes, schools, transport and subway stations. Over 900 different compounds have been detected in indoor air and some pollutants may be 2-5 times more concentrated inside rather than outside buildings.

Areas for action

- Outdoor air pollution must first be reduced - only then will adequate ventilation be able to play a role to reduce indoor air pollution
- Building material standards should be tightened to avoid worsening indoor air quality
- Policies aimed at reducing health inequalities are needed to achieve health benefits
- Better housing for those at risk of sub-standard accommodation – be it from heating or damp/mould – would improve the situation for many
- Occupational respiratory diseases are caused by indoor air pollutants – greater attention is needed to highlight and tackle the risks posed to workers in the modern age
- Radon is the second biggest risk factor for lung cancer
- Dampness and mould increases risk of asthma-related problems by 30-50%

Indoor air pollution is the 8th most important risk factor for disease and is responsible for an estimated 2.7% of the global burden of all diseases

Between 1.5 million and 2 million deaths a year could be linked to indoor air pollution

Around 50% of the world population (about 3 billion people) are exposed to indoor air pollution from open fires and wood-burning cooking stoves

In the USA, between 2,100 and 2,900 cases of lung cancer in non-smokers are linked to radon exposure

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