

Cancer: A risk factor for lung cancer is rising - it's not smoking and it affects us all

CANCER is caused by myriad factors, and while smoking has declined, air pollution has begun to play a larger role in the development of lung cancer globally.

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Researchers at Singapore's Nanyang Technological University have compared the global trends for [lung cancer](#), [smoking](#), and air pollution. As fewer people use tobacco products the rates of Squamous Cell Carcinoma, a cancer that forms in the airways, has gone down. Across the same time period, the rise in pollution has seen an increase in adenocarcinomas. These types of cancers form in the glandular cells around the edges of the lungs, rather than in the airways.

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Across the study's timeframe of 1990 to 2012, a six percent decline in smoking was observed.

This reduction in tobacco consumption saw a significant decrease in the prevalence of smoking-related cancers.

For each percentage point decline in smoking a nine percent decrease in lung squamous cell carcinoma was found.

Lung cancer remains one of the most common types of cancer, alongside breast cancer and prostate cancer.

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Air pollution has been linked to a global increase in lung cancers. (Image: Getty)

The study tied a 0.1 microgram per cubic metre increase in soot levels to a 12% increase in lung adenocarcinomas.

This effect is worldwide, and the amount of this pollutant has increased by 3.6 micrograms per cubic metre across the study's timeframe, 1990-2012.

Soot is a by-product of combustion, formed when fossil fuels are not burned completely.

The Climate and Clean Air Coalition notes that it is a short lived pollutant, that only remains in the atmosphere for a few weeks.

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Soot production is broadly the result household cooking and heating, alongside transportation.

The Climate and Clean Air Coalition attributes these causes to 77 percent of black carbon product.

It is believed to be responsible for seven million pollution related deaths annually, increasing the risk of heart disease, lung disease and strokes.

It also has a potent impact on climate change, increasing temperatures by 460-1500 times more than the same mass of carbon dioxide.

CANCER

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS TO LOOK OUT FOR ACCORDING TO THE NHS

CHANGES IN BOWEL HABITS

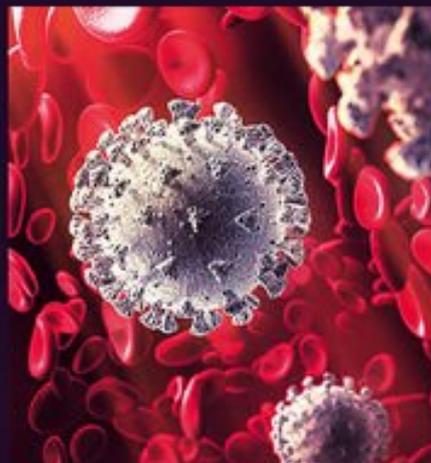
See your GP if you've noticed these changes and it's lasted for more than a few weeks: blood in your poo, diarrhoea or constipation for no obvious reason, a feeling of not having fully emptied your bowels after going to the toilet, and pain in your stomach (abdomen) or back passage (anus).

BLOATING

See a GP if you've had bloating for three weeks or more.

LUMP IN YOUR BREAST

See your GP if you notice a lump in your breast or if you have a lump that's rapidly increasing in size elsewhere on your body. Your GP will refer you to a specialist for tests if they think you may have cancer.



COUGHING, CHEST PAIN AND BREATHLESSNESS

Contact your GP if you've had a cough for more than three weeks. Symptoms such as shortness of breath or chest pain may also be a sign of a severe (acute) condition, such as pneumonia. See your GP straight away if you experience these types of symptoms.

UNEXPLAINED WEIGHT LOSS

You should also see your GP if you've lost a lot of weight over the last couple of months that cannot be explained by changes to your diet, exercise or stress.

BLEEDING

You should also see your GP if you have any unexplained bleeding, such as blood in your urine, bleeding between periods, bleeding from your bottom, blood when you cough, and blood in your vomit.

MOLES

See your GP if you have a mole that: changes shape or looks uneven, changes colour, gets darker or has more than two colours, starts itching, crusting, flaking or bleeding, or gets larger or more raised from the skin.

The CCA coalition advocates for global policies targeted at reducing amount of soot in the air by 80 percent by the end of the decade.

This would involve refitting home appliances that rely on impure fuels such as kerosene and lump coal.

Other policies they promote are the addition of filters on road vehicles to capture escaping soot, and the modernisation of some factory processes to reduce the amount of soot they produce.

A report they released claims that many of these programmes would provide a net profit after the initial investment required to implement changes.