High levels of fine particulate matter (PM$_{2.5}$) in the air are extremely dangerous caution IMA & Heart Care Foundation of India

New Delhi, 1st Nov 2016: Air pollution has reached alarming levels in the light of recent Diwali celebrations coupled with changing weather conditions. The effects are also exacerbated by the cold weather to create poisonous smog. In light of this, IMA & HCFI have issued an advisory urging people to take necessary preventive steps and to stop adding to the environmental damage by bursting crackers.

“Particle size PM$_{2.5}$, the most dangerous air pollutant is extremely permeable to lung tissue linings and is undetectable by the naked eye. Its levels have crossed the 1000 mark in most parts of Delhi, a situation that is extremely dangerous for one’s health. People are requested to stay indoors as much as possible and to not exercise in the open,” said Padma Shri Awardee Dr KK Aggarwal – President Heart Care Foundation of India (HCFI) & National President Elect IMA.

Air pollution can lead to symptoms like irritation of the eyes, nose, and throat, coughing, phlegm, chest tightness and shortness of breath in healthy people. These symptoms should go away when air quality improves. However, in people with pre existing health conditions like lung disease, asthma and COPD, the symptoms are much worse. These include the inability to breathe as deeply or as vigorously as normal, coughing, chest discomfort, wheezing, shortness of breath, and unusual fatigue. If you have any of these symptoms, reduce your exposure to particles and consult your doctors.

“Heart patients and those with respiratory disorders need to be extremely cautious about particle exposure as it can cause serious problems – including worsening of your disease – in a short period of time,” Dr KK Aggarwal added.

HCFI & IMA’s emergency guide to tackle the ongoing crisis

- Pollution is hazardous and steps must be taken to reduce the amount of polluted air that is inhaled by each one of us
- Stay indoors: In a room or building with filtered air
- Reduce activity levels. Avoid activities that make you breathe faster or more deeply. This is a good day for indoor activities, such as reading or watching TV.
- Avoid using anything that burns, such as wood fireplaces, gas logs, gas stoves and even candles or incense.
- Keep the room clean – but don’t vacuum unless your vacuum has a HEPA filter. That stirs up particles already inside your home. Wet mopping can help reduce dust.
- Don’t smoke.
• When the air quality improves, open the windows and air out your home or office.
• Do not rely on dust masks for protection. Paper "comfort" or "dust" masks are designed to trap large particles, such as sawdust. These masks will not protect your lungs from small particles such as PM2.5. Scarves or bandanas won’t help either.
• Disposable respirators known as N-95 or P-100 respirators can help if one is outdoor for a period of time. It’s important that one wear the respirator correctly, however.
• Particle pollution can seep indoors, so consider purchasing an air cleaner if you live in an area with high levels of particle pollution.
• Air cleaners that remove particles include high-efficiency mechanical filters and electronic air cleaners, such as electrostatic precipitators. Avoid using an air cleaner that works by generating ozone, which will increase the pollution in your home.
• If you do not have air cleaners in your home, try to go somewhere that does have air filtration.
• If you cannot buy filters for your entire home, create a clean room for sleeping. A good choice is a room with as few windows and doors as possible, such as a bedroom.
• If the room has windows, keep them closed.
• Run an air conditioner or central air conditioning system if you are certain your air conditioner does not draw air from outdoors and has a filter. If the air conditioner provides a fresh air option, keep the fresh-air intake closed. Make sure that the filter is clean enough to allow good air flow indoors.
• Use an air filter in that room.
• Air cleaners alone may not be enough. Because particle pollution from the outdoor air can easily get inside

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About Heart Care Foundation of India
Initiated in 1986, the Heart Care Foundation of India is a leading National NGO working in the field of creating mass health awareness among people from all walks of life and providing solutions for India's everyday healthcare needs. The NGO uses consumer-based entertainment modules to impart health education and increase awareness amongst people. A leading example of this is the Perfect Health Mela; an annual event started in 1993 that is attended by over 2-3 lakh people each year. The Mela showcases activities across categories such as health education seminars and check-ups, entertainment programs, lifestyle exhibitions, lectures, workshops, and competitions. In addition to this, the NGO conducts programs and camps to train people on the technique of hands only CPR through its CPR 10 mantra for revival after a sudden cardiac arrest. They currently hold three Limca book of world records for the maximum number of people trained in hands-only CPR in one go. Keeping article 21 of the Indian Constitution in mind, which guarantees a person Right to Life, Heart Care Foundation of India has also recently initiated a project called the Sameer Malik Heart Care Foundation Fund to ensure that no one dies of a heart disease just because they cannot afford treatment.
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