



Managing Kolkata's Pollution Triggers in children

Challenges in the City of Joy

Kolkata, a city of contrasts, faces certain unique challenges among which a significant one is air pollution. This is due to traffic congestion, industrial emissions, construction dust and seasonal factors such as winter smog and festival-related firecrackers. It must be kept in mind that children are particularly vulnerable to the harmful effects of pollution because their lungs are still developing and they breathe more air relative to their body weight than adults. Managing pollution triggers in kids is therefore essential for safeguarding their present and future health.

One of the most common pollution-related issues in children is respiratory illness. Exposure to polluted air can worsen asthma, trigger allergies, cause frequent coughs, wheezing, throat irritation and increase the risk of infections. Parents need to pay attention to symptoms such as persistent coughing, breathlessness during play, frequent colds or eye irritation, especially during high-pollution days. But how can they prevent this?

Reducing exposure is the first step. Parents should monitor daily air quality levels and limit outdoor activities when pollution levels are high, particularly in the early morning and late evening during winter months. If unavoidable, choosing less polluted areas such as parks away from busy roads can help. If children don't wear well-fitted masks on high-risk days, some additional protection can be vouchsafed for older children.

Equal attention needs to be paid towards improving indoor air quality, as children spend a significant amount of time indoors. Keeping windows closed during peak pollution hours, regular wet mopping to reduce dust and ensuring proper ventilation can help. Air purifiers with HEPA filters can also be beneficial, especially for children with asthma or allergies. It is imperative to avoid indoor pollutants such as incense sticks, mosquito coils and tobacco smoke.

The role of nutrition is also significant in protecting children from pollution-related damage. A balanced diet rich in antioxidants which are found in fruits and vegetables like oranges, guava, spinach, and carrots can strengthen the immune system. Additionally, adequate hydration supports the body's natural detoxification processes.

It is also a good idea to opt for regular health check-ups for children living in high-pollution environments like Kolkata. Children with pre-existing respiratory conditions need to follow their treatment plans strictly and have quick access to rescue medications if prescribed. Schools can contribute by reducing outdoor activities during severe pollution days and promoting awareness among students and parents.

The good news is that small, consistent steps at home can significantly reduce pollution triggers in kids. By staying informed, proactive and attentive, parents in Kolkata can help their children breathe easier and grow healthier.