

Diesel Pollution Is Harming Our Most Vulnerable Citizens, Our Youth and Elderly

Asthma is a chronic lung disorder that causes swelling and inflammation in the lungs. Asthma causes the airway to narrow, often in response to a trigger such as exposure to an allergen, exercise or emotional stress. This is common in childhood and is a leading cause of school absences and hospitalizations among children.

Asthma in Los Angeles County

Asthma rates in Los Angeles have increased dramatically over the last three decades. It is the most prevalent chronic disease among children, affecting over 3,000,000 children or 13.2 percent of children ages 5 to 17 in the county. Asthma is also the leading cause of children's visits to hospital emergency rooms.



Asthma Symptoms

Shortness of breath	Wheezing
Feeling tired	Common Cold
Frequent coughing	Allergies
Chest Pain/Tightness	

Nearly 200,000 children in L.A. County live with asthma. African American children have more than three times the rate of asthma (24.9%) compared to Latino children (8.0%) and white children (7.2%), and are four times as likely to visit an emergency room (ER) due to their asthma than white children, and ten times as likely to visit an ER for asthma than an Asian/Pacific Islander child.

Diesel Exhaust and Health

Diesel exhaust is a major source of air pollution, greenhouse gases, and diesel particulate matter. Diesel exhaust includes more than 40 substances listed as hazardous air pollutants by the United States Environmental Protection Agency (U.S. EPA) and California Air Resources Board (CARB). In 1990, diesel exhaust was declared a carcinogen, and in 1998, CARB identified diesel particulate matter as a toxic air contaminant based on published evidence of a relationship between diesel exhaust exposure and lung cancer.



DPM has a significant impact on the ability to breathe and can lead to the development of asthma in children, as well as COPD and pulmonary fibrosis in adults. If exposed to DPM and air pollution at a young age, the lungs of children don't grow as fast as they should which can result in underdevelopment and cause trouble breathing up until adulthood. In fact, children exposed to high levels of diesel exhaust are five times more likely than other children to have underdeveloped lungs. Besides causing asthma, diesel exhaust emits harmful toxins into the air that can trigger asthma attacks in those who already have the condition.

The highest level of exposure is experienced by people living near ports, rail yards and freeways where diesel fuel is used to operate heavy duty trucks, vehicles and machinery. Diesel trucks emit high levels of diesel exhaust and climate pollutants. Big rig trucks are responsible for one-fifth of the total GHG emissions from transportation sources in California.



About BREATHE LA

Breathe California of Los Angeles County (BREATHE LA) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to clean-air and lung health through research, education, advocacy and technology. BREATHE LA is dedicated to promoting solutions to improve air quality and reduce chronic lung diseases by partnering with community organizations, advocating for public policy changes, sponsoring lung health research, and educating the public. We envision healthier lives for all Southern California communities, working every day to provide cleaner air and healthy lungs for us all.

For More Information, Contact:

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