

Air Quality Factsheet

What is air pollution?

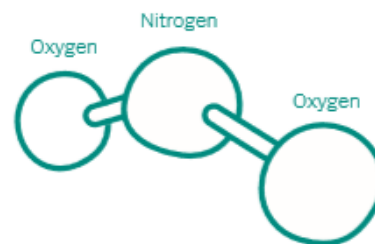
While there are many types of pollutants which affect air quality, the two which cause the most concern are:

- particulate matter - small particles which are too small to see
- nitrogen dioxide - NO_2 – a toxic gas which is invisible and odourless

Other pollutants can include ozone (O_3) and sulphur dioxide (SO_2)

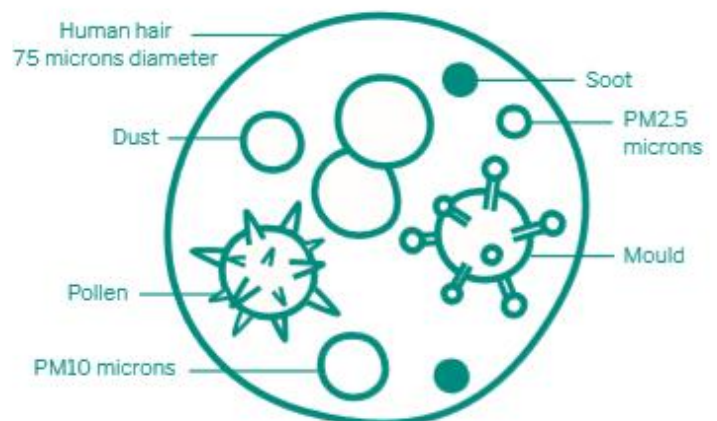
Nitrogen dioxide (NO_2)

– can irritate the lining of the lungs and is worse close to road traffic.



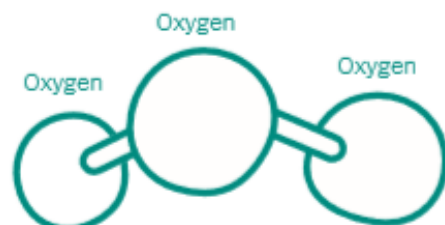
Particulate matter (PM)

– tiny solid particles or liquid droplets in the air, the smallest of which can pass into the bloodstream and are very hazardous to health.



Ozone (O_3)

– A gas formed when other pollutants (like nitrogen oxides) react in the atmosphere. The exhaust from diesel vehicles is a major source of NO_2 and particulates



Air pollution can be caused when we burn fossil fuels, such as:

- coal
- natural gas
- petrol
- diesel

We use these energy supplies for all sorts of things, from cooking and washing, to lighting and heating our homes and schools, and travelling by car.

One of the biggest causes of air pollution today is transport, especially cars. Today there are about 25 million cars on the road, and most of these use petrol or diesel as fuel. These cause gases and particles to be ejected from the exhaust, which contribute to air pollution. This pollution can be particularly dangerous for children.

Air Quality and Health

Air pollution can contribute to breathing problems, the development of asthma, and lung and heart diseases. The risks are greater for children, as their bodies are less resilient and still developing. Because of their height, they are also closer to the exhaust fumes from cars. Studies have also shown that living in very polluted areas can stop children's lungs developing properly, which could cause health problems later in life.

According to Asthma UK:

- Children and young adults with asthma are more at risk from the effects of pollution because they have faster breathing rates and their lungs are still developing
- Children living in areas with high pollution are more likely to have reduced lung function than adults
- Long-term exposure to high concentrations of air pollution may cause asthma in children
- Breathing in outdoor air pollution and diesel exhaust is linked to causing lung cancer.
- Exposure to air pollution contributes to around 36,000 premature deaths every year in the UK

For more information see 'London Healthy Air Healthier Children'

file:///C:/Users/Jan/Documents/S4S/2020/2020%20pack%20material/Healthy-air-children_London.pdf