

'HEART ATTACK LINKED TO AIR POLLUTION'

Relevant for: Environment | Topic: Environmental Pollution - Air, Water, Soil & E-waste

Air pollution could well be the new equivalent of smoking for heart diseases. A study, conducted by Sri Jayadeva Institute of Cardiovascular Sciences and Research, which tied up with institutions such as NIMHANS and St. John's Research Centre, Bengaluru, found that approximately 35% of patients with no conventional risk factors suffered from cardiovascular diseases (CAD) due to reasons linked to air pollution.

The study was released on Friday, ahead of World Heart Day observed on September 29.

Previously, air pollution was exclusively linked only to respiratory diseases. But in recent times, multiple clinical studies have proved the role of air pollution in causing cardiovascular diseases, said the researchers.

The research was carried out on 2,400 patients in the Premature Coronary Artery Disease (PCAD) Clinic from April 2017 to April 2019. Patients under the age of 40, who had been diagnosed with coronary artery disease, were registered.

The study shows that 26% of the patients were working in different types of jobs in the private sector; 15% each were agriculturists and daily wage workers, 12% were working in technical fields, and 6.5% were housewives. As many as 24% of the patients were drivers, which accounted for the most common nature of work among PCAD patients.

"Air pollution is a new tobacco; it kills more people than smoking. Out of one lakh Indians, about 200 people are prone to heart diseases due to air pollution. We conducted in-depth research on people who did not possess any risk factors who had heart diseases, and we discovered that their blood contained higher haemoglobin levels. But this kind of carboxy haemoglobin doesn't account as a healthy factor, and these were observed especially in drivers who were more exposed to air pollution," said C.N. Manjunath, Director of Sri Jayadeva Institute.

He also said now, more young Indians are vulnerable to heart diseases and air pollution is an emerging risk factor for heart attack. "A person stranded in a traffic junction for five minutes in a polluted area will be exposed to the effect of smoking five cigarettes," he said.

The report pointed out that transport is one of the major sources of emissions in Bengaluru. The PM10 annual average over Bengaluru is still almost 1.5 times the National Ambient Air Quality Standards. This can adversely affect health, it said.

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