The lung is not the only organ affected by air pollution, warns international respiratory group

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The Forum of International Respiratory Societies (FIRS) warns that air pollution exposure affects many organs beyond the lungs, posing a great risk to health. Outdoor fine particulate matter exposure is the fifth leading risk factor for death in the world, accounting for 4.2 million deaths and 103 million disability-adjusted life years lost according to the Global Burden of Disease Report.

FIRS' Environmental Committee published two articles in the journal CHEST on the effects of air pollution on health and evidence for its association with many diseases.

"It is well-known that air pollution is a major contributor to lung disease, but this review also shows how it can damage most other organ systems of the body. The hope is that people and organisations outside the respiratory realm will see just how air pollution affects other organs and join in the fight for clean air." Dean Schraufnagel, MD, review author and Executive Director of FIRS.

The FIRS' two-part review highlights the number and extent of diseases caused or made worse by air pollution. Stroke, dementia, many cancers, diabetes, obesity, metabolic syndrome, allergies, and osteoporosis are all associated with air pollution. Air pollution is controllable and, therefore, many of these adverse health effects can be prevented.

Dean Schraufnagel concludes: "The best way to reduce exposure to air pollution is to control it at its source, which is done by setting standards and regulatory processes. Individuals can reduce exposure by avoiding polluted areas, staying indoors in times of high outdoor pollution, and filtering air by wearing a personal respirator (face mask)."

Visit the FIRS' website for more information.

The two-part articles, The Damaging Effects of Air Pollution and Air Pollution and Organ Systems, can be found on the journal CHEST website.

About the Forum of International Respiratory Societies (FIRS)

The Forum of International Respiratory Societies (FIRS) is an organisation comprised of the world's leading international respiratory societies working together to improve lung health globally: American College of Chest Physicians (CHEST), American Thoracic Society (ATS), Asian Pacific Society of Respirology (APSR), Asociación Latino Americana De Tórax (ALAT), European Respiratory Society (ERS), International Union Against Tuberculosis and Lung Diseases (The Union), Pan African Thoracic Society (PATS), Global Initiative for Asthma (GINA), and the Global Initiative for Chronic Obstructive Lung Disease (GOLD).

The goal of FIRS is to unify and enhance efforts to improve lung health through the combined work of its more than 70,000 members globally.

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