

Study Finds Air Pollution Stunts Lung Growth in Children

A study released in the September 9th edition of the New England Journal of Medicine provides definitive evidence that smog limits the development of healthy lungs in children, documenting that smog does more than just exacerbate existing lung conditions. The study, conducted by a team of University of Southern California researchers, tracked lung development in nearly 1,800 students living in the Southern California region from 4th grade until high school graduation. A key finding of the study reveals that lung development is slower in children living in highly polluted communities, while lung function improves appreciably when children move to less-polluted communities. The study also found that living in areas of high air pollution increases by five-fold the chances that a child will develop weak lungs. Researchers described reductions in breathing ability “clinically significant” for those children living in highly polluted communities.

Nearly 12 million children in the United States already suffer from asthma. Pollution, especially from diesel vehicles, can aggravate asthma in children, while some studies are beginning to show that diesel pollution can actually cause the onset of asthma. Targeting vehicle emissions is a key factor in improving the health and welfare of children nationwide.

A summary of the report is available online at <http://www.scpcs.ucla.edu/news/CHSPolicyBrief.pdf>