

LIFESTYLE, HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Pollution poses risk to asthma patients

DECCAN CHRONICLE

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On World Asthma Day, medicos discuss risk factors and available treatment facilities for asthma.



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Chennai: With around 15 and 20 million people suffering from asthma in India as per the estimates by World Health Organisation, prevalence is high at 10 to 15 per cent in 5-11 year-old children, while it increases in elderly.

On World Asthma Day, medicos discuss risk factors and available treatment facilities for asthma. Asthma patients suffer from wheezing, breathlessness and chest tightness regularly. Allergens such as pollutants, dust, weather changes, pollen, mites and hazardous gases in indoor and outdoor air make asthma the most common chronic disorder in India.

"The levels of Respirable Suspended Particulate Matter (RSPM) have increased in the air due to increased levels of pollution, which penetrates into lungs and makes breathing difficult. Patients affected the most were those who were already suffering from asthma, heart diseases, chronic bronchitis, and even lung infections. The sharp deterioration in air quality puts paediatrics and elderly at utmost risk who suffer from exacerbations due to an increase in the pollutants in the surroundings," said Dr S Jayaraman, pulmonologist, Billroth Hospital.

The key challenges in the management of asthma include improving compliance and developing effective and easy-to-use inhalers, while bronchial thermoplasty therapy has emerged as an effective treatment for patients with drug-resistant asthma.

Speaking about the latest breakthroughs in treatment of asthma, Dr Arvind Perathur, consultant, department of pulmonary medicine, Amrita Institute of Medical Sciences, says, "Inhalers and staying away from common allergens is the corner stone for treatment. The newest modality available is bronchial thermoplasty. This uses radio frequency energy heat to decrease the airway wall thickness and helps decrease asthma symptoms. Nearly 80 percent of patients have a great-sustained response".

Bronchial Thermoplasty is performed under moderate anesthesia either on a day care basis with a day's hospitalization. Hence, any patients who suffer from severe, drug-resistant asthma can be recommended for the procedure.

Dr R Narasimhan, respiratory medicine specialist, Apollo Hospitals says, "The procedure involves the insertion of a small tube into the patient's airway through which therapeutic radio frequency energy is passed to heat smooth muscles that narrows the airway. Bronchial Thermoplasty helps clear the bronchial airways by delivering thermal energy to the smooth muscle."

The process decreases constriction in the patient's airways and enables easier breathing, reducing the frequency and severity of asthma attacks for patients with severe, persistent, drug-resistant asthma, he adds.