

# List of pollution-related diseases

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Diseases caused by pollution lead to the deaths of about 8.4 million people each year. "However, pollution receives a fraction of the interest from the global community.<sup>[1]</sup> This is in part because pollution causes so many diseases that is it often difficult to draw a straight line between cause and effect.

There are many different types of pollution-related diseases, including those caused by air pollution, contaminated soil and water, sanitation and hygiene.

## Contents

- 1 Environmental Diseases vs. Pollution-Related Diseases
- 2 Air pollution
  - 2.1 Outdoor air pollution
  - 2.2 Indoor air pollution
- 3 Water pollution
  - 3.1 Waterborne diseases
  - 3.2 Sanitation and hygiene diseases
  - 3.3 Vector-borne diseases
- 4 Toxins
  - 4.1 Lead
  - 4.2 Arsenic
  - 4.3 Mercury
- 5 References

## Environmental Diseases vs. Pollution-Related Diseases

Environmental diseases are a direct result from the environment. This includes diseases caused by substance abuse, exposure to toxic chemicals, and physical factors in the environment, like UV radiation from the sun, as well as genetic predisposition. Meanwhile, pollution-related diseases are attributed to exposure to toxins in the air, water, and soil. Therefore all pollution-related disease are environmental diseases, but not all environmental diseases are pollution-related diseases.

## **Air pollution**

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), air pollution is linked to 7 million premature deaths. Here is a breakdown by the diseases air pollution causes:<sup>[2]</sup>

### **Outdoor air pollution**

- 40% – ischaemic heart disease
- 40% – stroke
- 11% – chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD)
- 6% - lung cancer
- 3% – acute lower respiratory infections in children

### **Indoor air pollution**

- 34% - stroke
- 26% - ischaemic heart disease
- 22% - COPD
- 12% - acute lower respiratory infections in children
- 6% - lung cancer

## **Water pollution**

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC):  
"Waterborne diseases are caused by pathogenic microbes that can be directly spread through contaminated water. Most waterborne diseases cause diarrheal illness [Note: not all diseases listed below cause diarrhea]. Eighty-eight percent of diarrhea cases worldwide are linked to unsafe water, inadequate sanitation or insufficient hygiene. These cases result in 1.5 million deaths each year, mostly in young children. The usual cause of death is dehydration. Most cases of diarrheal illness and death occur in developing countries because of unsafe water, poor sanitation, and insufficient hygiene. Other waterborne diseases do not cause diarrhea; instead these diseases can cause malnutrition, skin infections, and organ damage.<sup>[3]</sup>

## Waterborne diseases

- Amoebiasis
- Buruli ulcer
- Campylobacter
- Cholera
- Cryptosporidiosis
- Cyclosporiasis
- Dracunculiasis (guinea-worm disease)
- Escherichia coli
- Fascioliasis
- Giardiasis
- Hepatitis
- Leptospirosis
- Norovirus
- Rotavirus
- Salmonella
- Schistosomiasis
- Shigellosis
- Typhoid fever

## Sanitation and hygiene diseases

- Lymphatic filariasis
- Dermatophytosis (ringworm)
- Scabies
- Soil transmitted helminthiasis
- Trachoma

## Vector-borne diseases

- Arboviral encephalitis
- Dengue fever
- Malaria
- Onchocerciasis
- Rift Valley fever
- Yellow fever

## Toxins

### Lead

Sources of lead poisoning/pollution include mining, smelting, manufacturing and recycling activities.<sup>[4][5]</sup>

- Cardiovascular disease
- Cerebrovascular disease
- Chronic Kidney disease
- Hemorrhagic stroke
- Hypertensive heart disorder
- Ischemic heart disease
- Ischemic stroke
- Neurological impairment

## Arsenic

Arsenic is a naturally occurring element and can be found in food, water, or air. There are also industrial sources of arsenic, including mining and smelting.<sup>[6]</sup> "People are exposed to elevated levels of inorganic arsenic through drinking contaminated water, using contaminated water in food preparation and irrigation of food crops, industrial processes, eating contaminated food and smoking tobacco. Long-term exposure to inorganic arsenic... can lead to chronic arsenic poisoning. Skin lesions and skin cancer are the most characteristic effects."<sup>[7]</sup>

- Arsenicosis
- Cancers (lung, bladder, and skin)
- Cardiovascular disease
- Chronic kidney disease
- Neurobehavioral impairment

## Mercury

- Minamata disease
- Cerebellar ataxia
- Kidney and autoimmune dysfunction
- Acrodynia
- Dysarthria
- Arthritis
- Respiratory failure
- Neurological damage

## References

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2. "7 million premature deaths annually linked to air pollution". World Health Organization (WHO). March 25, 2014.

3. "Global WASH-Related Diseases and Contaminants". CDC.
4. "Lead Poisoning and Health". World Health Organization. Aug 2016.
5. "Fact Sheet - Lead". *2015 World's Worst Pollution Problems*. worstpolluted.org.
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