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Air pollution: New Delhi, India

Travellers are advised to take sensible precautions to minimise their exposure to high levels of air pollution

New Delhi is currently experiencing “severe” levels of air pollution with levels of pollutants reaching hazardous levels over recent days [1]. Contributory factors include firecrackers ignited during Diwali celebrations, the seasonal (but often prohibited) burning of stubble and severe adverse weather. In response to the current hazardous situation, on 1 November 2019, the Environmental Pollution (Prevention and Control) Authority for the Delhi National Capital Region (NCR) declared a public health emergency for the NCR [2].

In addition to mandating measures that must be taken to combat the pollution in Delhi, the authorities advise all (particularly children, the aged and those who are otherwise vulnerable) to minimise exposure to the high levels of pollution, including restricting physical exercise outside, until levels of pollution reduce [2].

Advice for travellers

You are advised to take sensible precautions to minimise your exposure to high levels of air pollution by:

- Restricting time spent outside
- Restricting physical exercise outside
- Public Health England (PHE) advise that a properly fitted face mask may provide some protection. While masks should be available in India, you may choose to buy your own before you travel. PHE recommend masks that comply with EU standards P2 or P3 or the [US standards N95 or N98](#). You should make sure that your mask fits your face and you know how to wear it properly [3,4,5].

You are also advised to take notice of any Health Advisories published by the Indian Authorities.

Air pollution can affect everyone, including healthy people. Short-term exposure (over hours or days) to elevated levels of [air pollutants](#) may result in worsening or aggravation of pre-existing respiratory, heart or circulatory system illnesses. Long-term exposure (over years or lifetime) to air pollution reduces life expectancy by increasing deaths from heart or circulatory and respiratory conditions and from lung cancer [6].

If you have pre-existing conditions that might make you more vulnerable to the effects of air pollution and are travelling to areas where air pollution levels are high, you should discuss your travel plans with your healthcare provider, follow precautions to minimise your exposure, and carry adequate supplies of your regular medication.

Country-specific health advice for travellers to India can be found on [our Country Information page](#).

Travellers are advised to consult the [Foreign and Commonwealth Office](#) for current travel advisories for India.

Resources

- [World Health Organization: Air Pollution](#)

References

1. [Ministry of Earth Science, Govt. of India. System of Air Quality and Weather Forecasting and Research \(SAFAR\) \[Accessed 5 November 2019\]](#)
2. [Authority for the National Capital Region. Environmental Pollution \(Prevention and Control\) Letter to the CS. Urgent directions regarding GRAP. EPCA-R/2019/L-53. November 1 2019 \[Accessed 5 November 2019\]](#)
3. Langrish, J.P., Mills, N.L., Chan, J.K, et al. Beneficial cardiovascular effects of reducing exposure to particulate air pollution with a simple facemask. Part Fibre Toxicol, 8, Vol. 6. 2009.
4. Langrish, J.P., Li, X., Wang, S., et al. Reducing personal exposure to particulate air pollution improves cardiovascular health in patients with coronary heart disease. Environmental Health Perspectives, 3, Vol. 120, pp. 367-372. 2012.
5. [Viera, J.L., Guimaraes, G.V., De Andre, P.A. et al. Respiratory filter reduces the cardiovascular effects associated with diesel exhaust exposure: a randomized prospective, double-blind, controlled study of heart failure: the FILTER_HF trial. \[Online\] 2015.](#)
6. [Public Health England. Guidance - Health Matters: Air Pollution. 14 November 2018 \[Accessed 5 November 2019\]](#)