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## Avoid cracker pollution this Diwali

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Try to avoid cracker pollution this Diwali. Lighting those red 'ladi' string bombs and other smoke-emanating fireworks may seem exciting, but are a host of illness triggers. When these crackers are burst, the air gets charged with partially combusted low volatile organic compounds which remain suspended in the atmosphere for several days. This is deadly for not just asthmatics, but causes breathing difficulties in anyone, warn experts.

### Poisonous to the lungs

During this time, cases of asthma or COPD (chronic obstructive pulmonary disease) actually double, informs Dr Prashant Chhajed, chest and respiratory disease specialist. "Several crackers have multiple toxic

compounds like copper and cadmium, which stay suspended in the air in dust form. These are respiratory irritants and increase the risk of asthma attacks, bronchitis and symptoms of allergic rhinitis, including sneezing, runny nose and headaches. What is alarming is that the festive time coincides with a cooler weather, which means the prevalent smog will worsen things," he says. He advises people to avoid cracker pollution this Diwali.

These noxious fumes and gases may take long to dissipate, so one can succumb to respiratory issues even during the days after Diwali, cautions pulmonologist, Dr Sujeet Rajan. "In Mumbai, you also have vehicular exhaust that adds to this. We should behave responsibly enough. Besides, Diwali should be about light than noise. If you look at the environment pollution in terms of particulate matters, it's the worst at this point."

He also advises people to avoid cracker pollution this Diwali. "I think more than intensity, it's the duration and quality of the crackers too. Sparklers are not that bad, but certain 'tablets' that wind up like a snake are the worst, as per the Chest Research Foundation, Pune. Thus, anyone with an airway disease can suffer badly with this," he adds.

### Causes Eardrum injuries

High velocity crackers cause severe eardrum damage. "This is very common at this time due to sound explosion," says ENT specialist Dr Sanjay Helale. "I get so many cases of people who suffer holes in the eardrums not due to a direct injury, but the intense sound pressure of crackers. It can cause irreparable hearing loss because if nerve is badly damaged, nothing can be done. This also causes an unpleasant ringing sound in the ear and giddiness, which can last anywhere for days to months." He also advises people to avoid cracker pollution this Diwali.

### What to do

- Stay indoors, keep windows closed.
- Those suffering from asthma or bronchitis should take medicines regularly during this period.
- At any sign of increased breathlessness, seek medical attention.
  
- Wear plain glasses or wear mask if you are in proximity of burning crackers as the chemicals can cause redness and watering of the eyes.

This Diwali, go green. Spread the festivity with lights and colours. Crackers not just cause pollution and accidents, they also have an adverse effect on flora and fauna around you! Have a safe and prosperous Diwali without causing harm to anybody.