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THE TIMES OF INDIA

Take good care to breathe easy in winter, say doctors

TNN | Dec 16, 2016, 01:33 AM IST

NAVI MUMBAI: Coping with the city's winter pollution is not easy. For those suffering from bronchitis, asthma and allergies, the air is particularly unkind. The accompanying symptoms, say physicians, are far worse with running nose, chest congestion, cough and burning eyes. During the winter, the polluted air and particulate matter does not rise, making the ambient air quality very poor.

Dr Prashant Chhajed, chest physician and pulmonologist at Fortis Vashi said that those suffering from chest ailments should be careful.

"During this season, anyone who experience tightening in the chest, chronic breathlessness and persistent cough must seek medical attention immediately," he advised.

He suggests that patients who suffer from asthma or any other pre-existing condition, must ensure to take their medication regularly. For children, a persistent cold and cough that stays over a week is not a healthy sign and must be checked.

"If you're an athlete, try to wear a mask over your mouth and nose. It will reduce the amount of pollutants you may be inhaling. If you are working out or running, select an indoor space or some place away from traffic or highways," he added.

On days when the air is especially bad, added Dr Chhajed, avoid getting outdoors. He suggested that if you have a work-from-home policy, try to do so at least every alternate day.

"There is now substantial evidence in India on the adverse effects of air pollution on pregnancy and infant health. The evidence shows that air pollution increases the risk of death from respiratory causes in the post-neonatal period," said Dr Akshay Chhallani, physician and critical care medicine expert, Sterling Wockhardt, Vashi.

Dr Makrand Salunke , consulting physician, Currae Hospital that has an OPD in the city said, "Two in 15 people have asthma problems due to rising air pollution in the city. Navi Mumbai is surrounded by two national highways which remain polluted from the smoke and toxic fumes emitted by the heavy vehicles and the nearby construction sites."

Airoli, Vashi, Nerul, Turbhe and Belapur are industrial hubs. The air in these areas includes floating particles of sulphate, nitrates and black carbon that can penetrate deep into the lungs