

Traffic fumes stunt growth of children's lungs

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EXPOSURE to traffic pollution is stunting the growth of children's lungs, cutting their breathing power by up to 17%, a study has found.

Researchers from the Royal London hospital have linked the damage in apparently healthy children living in inner cities to particulates, tiny particles contained in exhaust fumes.

While the high levels of asthma in urban areas have long been recognised, the impact on healthy children has been less well appreciated.

"Breathing polluted city air is similar to letting children smoke," said Jonathan Grigg, professor of paediatric respiratory and environmental medicine at the Royal London, who led the study.

"These small particles can get across the lungs into the blood, triggering cascades of inflammation. In children they appear to restrict lung growth and function. **That means they are growing up with a deficit that will be with them for life.**"

http://www.thesundaytimes.co.uk/sto/news/uk_news/Health/article1021938.ece