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# 8-10% rise in the number of asthma patients since last 10 years

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**Even nonasthmatics are complaining of dry cough, breathlessness due to pollution**

Asthma is a heterogeneous disease, characterized by long-standing airway inflammation. It is manifested by respiratory symptoms such as wheeze, shortness of breath, chest tightness and a dry cough that varies over time & intensity. According to the statistics provided by the World Health Organization (WHO), there were 383000 deaths due to asthma in 2015. In fact, asthma is not just a public health problem for high-income countries: it occurs in all countries regardless of the level of

development.

Speaking about the Indian scenario, the study published in the Lancet Planetary Health, found that traffic pollution caused asthma among 350,000 children in India, the second largest after China. Surely, asthma is a growing matter of concern. Especially, in urban areas like Mumbai, where air pollution, allergens, and construction work, can be the main culprits. Though, these factors not only trigger asthma but Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) and small airway disease too.

**Dr. Kedar Toraskar, pulmonologist & Intensivist at Wockhardt Hospitals, Mumbai Central**, "Along with asthma there is a significant surge of a patient suffering from COPD & small airways diseases too in the last decade. This is especially true in metropolitan cities like Mumbai where air pollution is increasing in alarming proportions mainly due to construction activities and over the increasing number of vehicles and other allergens. These factors not only trigger asthma but are also responsible for COPD and small airways diseases too. Elderly people and children are more vulnerable due to weakened defences."

Pulmonary function test is a simple non-invasive modality to know about the functional capacity of the lung and it holds the key for proper and timely diagnosis of asthma apart from the signs and symptoms and blood investigations with imaging. PFT is one the most underutilized test which helps in diagnosis, assessing severity, gauging the response to treatment & monitoring the course of all the chronic obstructive airway disease.

A correct diagnosis & timely management in the form of avoiding triggers and use of inhaled corticosteroids with bronchodilators can be key.

**Dr. Arvind Kate, Pulmonologist, Zen Multispecialty Hospital, said,** "Since, last 10 years, in the age group 20-45, patients who are nonasthmatic come with complaints like dry cough and symptoms of asthma and this have surged up to 8-10%. Surely, the number of patients having asthma is on the rise. Not only this, because of the seasonal change, people are prone to viral infections. Hence, this can lead to viral exacerbation of bronchial asthma. You will also be shocked to know that agarbatti smoke can also be one of the triggers of asthma. Furthermore, there are few studies which suggest that the consumption of junk food more than thrice a week can increase asthma propensity. Another study also reveals that eating fruits can also help for asthma control.