



Noncommunicable diseases and air pollution

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Air pollution is the second leading cause of deaths from noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) after tobacco smoking, according to WHO.

Globally, household and ambient air pollution causes 7 million premature deaths each year, including more than 5 million caused by NCDs related to air pollution. In the WHO European Region, more than 550 000 deaths were attributable to the joint effects of household and ambient air pollution in 2016.

Tackling air pollution is a key factor in reducing premature mortality. Indeed, air pollution was included as a fifth risk factor for NCDs at the United Nations High-level Meeting on NCDs in September 2018. Acknowledging this, a policy paper was prepared as a background document for the WHO European High-level Conference on NCDs in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan.

In addition to cardiovascular- and respiratory-related NCDs, evidence is emerging of other effects of air pollution, such as diabetes, neurological development issues in children and neurological problems in adults, according to WHO.

Given the body of evidence on the health effects of air pollution and the magnitude of the public health impact of this environmental risk factor, any intervention will require multisectoral approaches and the