

Goodies

Problems
in the air

As a rapidly developing international city, Hong Kong has suffered from air pollution like any other big city. What is the source of air pollution in Hong Kong and how does it affect our health?

Editor's Note

Hi! A few years ago I visited the British Museum in London and saw many wonderful things. The exhibits were hundreds or even thousands of years old. Many of them were actually taken by the naughty British without anyone's permission, but the good thing is that the exhibits have been well preserved. The highlight of my visit was the Ancient Egypt section and I saw a few creepy coffins with mummies inside them. I even saw a mummy cat! It was scary to think I was standing next to dead bodies! Now is your chance to see them too when these mummies are in Hong Kong from June to October. There will be special equipment to see what is inside them. Turn to G03 to learn more.

Simon

Where is your oxygen tank? It is dangerous to breathe the air outside!

I would prefer stopping the source of air pollution first!



AIR pollution in Hong Kong is an issue that needs to be tackled. Its sources are mainly substances emitted by cars and power stations. Pollution from nearby areas like Shenzhen also gets blown over here. If there is no moving air in Hong Kong, these pollutants remain as smog.



Problems caused by bad air

WHEN we breathe, air enters our bodies through **airways**. These airways have muscles around them and inside are thin pieces of tissue called **membranes**. For people who have **asthma**, pollutants in the air will make membranes become **inflamed** and produce a liquid called **mucus**. At the same time the muscles get tighter. An asthmatic will then start coughing to get rid of the mucus, causing chest pains, while the narrow airway makes it hard to breathe again. The situation is uncomfortable and sometimes even dangerous.

People with **respiratory illnesses** therefore have to avoid outdoor activities when the air pollution level is high.

Beware of tiny pollutants

ONE pollutant we must be especially careful about is PM2.5. This is a very tiny pollutant with a diameter no bigger than 2.5 micrometres – in other words, one millionth of a metre. They mainly come from car exhaust fumes or when coal is burned at power stations to produce electricity. When we breathe in these very fine particles, it damages our lungs. This is really bad for young children as their lungs are not strong enough and it could lead to lung disease. Even wearing a facemask would not stop them entering your body because the particles are very small. The PM2.5 levels vary every day so ask your parents to check them at the World Air Quality Index (aqicn.org).



Air Pollution Health Index (APHI)

THE Aphi can help people measure the level of air pollution in the short term. There are five categories for Aphi as seen below. However, it does not show any PM2.5 readings.



Learn English

THE word 'smog' is a portmanteau word. That means it is a combination of two words: smoke and fog. It can be used to describe when the air in Beijing gets really bad and you cannot see much in front of you.