

Table 3.3 Health effects of pollutants from motor vehicles

Pollutant	Health effects
Carbon	Interferes with absorption of oxygen by hemoglobin (red blood cells); Impairs perception and thinking, slows reflexes, causes drowsiness, brings on angina and can cause unconsciousness and death; It affects fetal growth in pregnant women and tissue development of young children.
Nitrogen oxides	Can increase susceptibility to viral infections such as influenza; irritate the lungs and cause edema, bronchitis and pneumonia.
Hydrocarbons and other volatile organic compounds	Low-molecular weight compounds cause unpleasant effects such as eye irritation, coughing and sneezing, drowsiness and symptoms akin to drunkenness; heavymolecular weight compounds may have carcinogenic or mutagenic effects.
Ozone	Irritates mucous membranes of respiratory system causing coughing, choking and impaired lung function, causes headaches and physical discomfort; reduces resistance to colds and pneumonia; can aggravate chronic heart disease, asthma, bronchitis and emphysema.
Lead	Affects circulatory, reproductive, nervous and kidney systems; suspected of causing hyperactivity and lowered learning ability in children; hazardous even after exposure ends.
Sulfur dioxide	Exacerbates asthma, bronchitis and emphysema.
Particulates	Irritates mucous membranes and may initiate a variety of respiratory diseases; fine particles may cause cancer. A strong correlation exists between suspended particulates and infant mortality in urban areas.