

Lung Diseases on the Rise Worldwide

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THURSDAY, Feb. 20, 2020 (HealthDay News) -- Lung diseases have been striking more people around the world in the past 30 years, new research shows.

And being from poor regions is the most important risk factor for respiratory trouble, the scientists added.

Aging and risk factors such as smoking, pollution and overweight/obesity are among the other major risk factors for chronic lung diseases, according to the analysis of data from 195 countries.

Researchers led by Dr. Min Xie, from Tongji Medical College and Huazhong University of Science and Technology in Wuhan, China, found that the number of deaths from chronic lung diseases rose 18% over the past three decades, from 3.3 million in 1990 to 3.9 million in 2017.

The number of deaths increased with age and rose sharply among people aged 70 and older, and this age-related burden is likely to increase as the worldwide population ages, the researchers noted.

The most common chronic lung diseases are chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) and asthma, but others such as pneumoconiosis (lung disease due to dust inhalation), interstitial lung disease and pulmonary sarcoidosis (due to lung scarring and inflammation) are also public health concerns worldwide.

The study was published Feb. 19 in the *BMJ* journal.

Overall, the highest rates of lung disease are in the poorest regions of the world. Lower rates in

wealthier countries are due to people having better access to health services and improved treatments, Xie and colleagues said.

Smoking is the leading risk factor for deaths and disability due to COPD and asthma. In 2017, smoking accounted for 1.4 million deaths.

The impact of smoking was particularly strong in poorer areas, which shows the urgent need to improve tobacco control in developing countries, the study authors said.

Pollution from airborne particulate matter was the next most important risk factor for COPD.

Obesity accounted for the most deaths from asthma since 2013, particularly in women.

"As the prevalence of obesity continues to increase at a worrying rate worldwide, weight loss should be included in the management of obese patients with asthma," the researchers wrote in a journal news release.

More information

The American Lung Association offers [health tips for your lungs](#).

SOURCE: *BMJ*, news release, Feb. 19, 2020