

Black carbon in air - Major cause of high BP

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Singapore: In a study published in the National Academy of Sciences, researchers explained that pollution from cooking stoves and road highways were a major cause of high blood pressure among Chinese women. Scientists said that black carbon, after carbon dioxide, was the second leading human caused pollution.

Researchers explained that nearly half of the Chinese families cooked using coal and wood. They cautioned that such practices led to tremendous amounts of carbon being released into the atmosphere.

The study involved 280 women living in rural areas of China, who wore portable air samplers that collected air particulate matter (PM) smaller than 2.5 micrometers, a size commonly associated with adverse health effects.

Mr Jill Baumgartner, lead author, explained, "We found that exposure to black carbon pollutants emitting from cookstoves, had the largest impact on women's blood pressure, increasing the risk of a heart disease."

Also, living in the vicinity of a highway was seen to be increasing systolic blood pressure three times when compared to normal blood pressure. Mr Baumgartner further added, "Reducing such exposure should lead to a reduction in the adverse health and climate impacts of air pollution."