Children breathe faster than adults; live closer to the ground where some pollutants can reach peak concentrations; they spend more time outside engaging in physical activity in potentially polluted air or in the house around a dirty fuel burning stove - all factors that increase their exposure to air pollutants and consequently its impacts.

Children’s susceptibility to air pollution can begin as early as in utero. The periods when the endocrine, reproductive, immune, visual, or nervous systems are developing are particularly sensitive to environmental exposures, and exposures during these “windows of susceptibility” can impact health outcomes later in life.

Respiratory disorders are the most widely recognized health impact of air pollution on children’s health. However, there is compelling evidence that air pollution damages the health of children in numerous ways.

Ambient and household air pollution contributed to acute lower respiratory tract infections (ALRI) that resulted in 63% mortality in children under 5 in South East Asia in 2016.¹

ALRI is one of the leading causes of death for children under 5 in the region and worldwide.

A combination of behavioral, environmental, and physiological factors puts children at a greater risk than adults from the adverse impacts of air pollution.

Maternal exposure to fine particulate matter increases the risk of preterm birth, stillbirth, and low birth-weight infants.

Traffic related air pollution is associated with increased risk of childhood leukemia.

Evidence is also emerging that exposure to AAP is linked to certain adverse metabolic outcomes in children including positive associations between in utero exposure and postnatal weight gain; and traffic related air pollution and insulin resistance in children.

Traffic related air pollution is associated with increased risk of childhood leukemia.

Exposure to air pollution damages children’s lungs. Exposure to HAP and AAP increases risk of ALRI in children. Exposure to AAP increases risk of developing asthma and it also exacerbates existing childhood asthma.

With air pollution’s ability to impact the physical and mental health of children into their adulthood across political and socioeconomic borders, urgent action to address air pollution is needed to ensure that the next generation can lead healthy and productive lives.