

Healthy Home Healthy Child

Air Pollution in Your Neighborhood — What's Being Done To Improve It

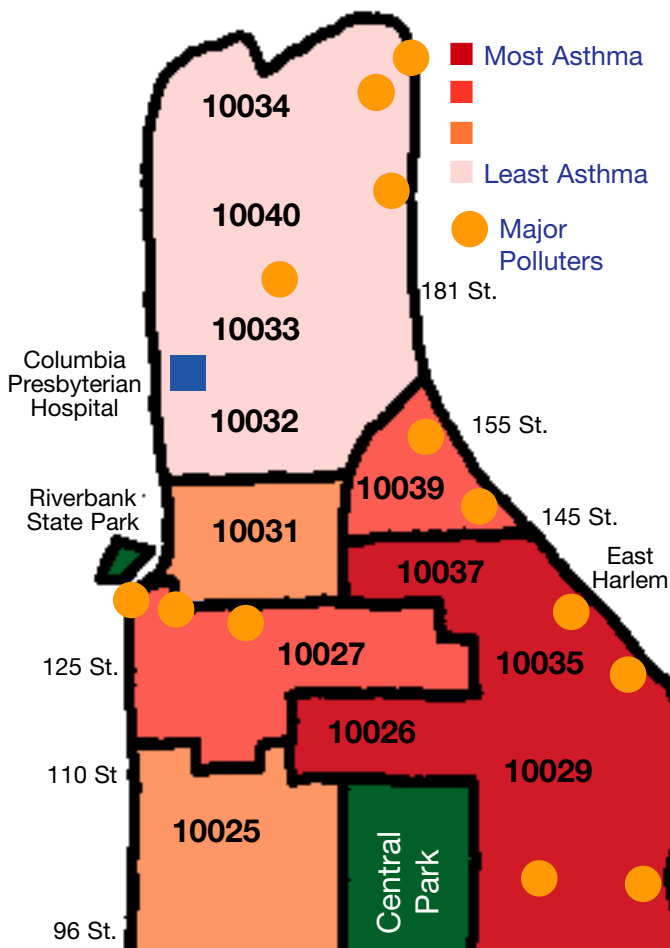
SPRING 2005

DEAR MOMS:

We hear you. Many of you know that people in Northern Manhattan and the South Bronx have more asthma than people from other places in the country. We know that you want more information about how air pollution can harm your child's health and what you can do to protect your family.

With your help, scientists at the **Columbia Center for Children's Environmental Health** are learning more about how children are affected by air pollution. **We are finding that local street traffic is a big problem AND being around cigarette smoke makes children's health much worse.**

CHILD ASTHMA BY ZIP CODE IN NORTHERN MANHATTAN More Air Pollution Means More Asthma



MORE THAN OUR FAIR SHARE OF POLLUTION

PROBLEM: Traffic, traffic! No surprise that a lot of New York City's air pollution comes from heavy traffic. Trucks and buses are the worst polluters. For years the city has put depots for diesel trucks and buses into Northern Manhattan and the South Bronx. More trucks and buses coming into the area means more pollution than other parts of the city with less traffic. This is true for many neighborhoods that are generally poor and where people of color live. **Science shows that air pollution leads to diseases like asthma.**

DIESEL IS DIRTY

PROBLEM: Most trucks and buses use diesel fuel, not gasoline. **Diesel is a big polluter.** Trucks and buses without new emission controls can put 50 times more pollution into the air than vehicles using gasoline. When diesel fuel burns, **black carbon particles** get into the air. The Mothers & Children Study is finding that **black carbon is getting into your homes.**

NORTHERN MANHATTAN HAS:

- 6 of Manhattan's 7 Metropolitan Transit Authority bus depots
- all 3 of Manhattan's diesel garbage truck depots
- both of Manhattan's sewage treatment plants

SOUTH BRONX HAS:

- 15 waste transfer stations processing almost 1/3 of the city's solid waste
- 2 large sewage treatment plants
- Hunts Point Market – the world's largest food distribution center

WHAT'S INSIDE

PAGE

- 1 MORE THAN OUR FAIR SHARE OF POLLUTION
- 1 DIESEL IS DIRTY
- 2 WHAT THE MOTHERS & CHILDREN STUDY IS FINDING OUT
- 2 COMMUNITY WINS
- 3 COMMUNITY GOALS
- 4 GET INVOLVED
- 4 HIKE THE HEIGHTS on June 25th
- 4 COMMUNITY RESOURCE CORNER

PROBLEM: The nose, throat, and lungs (upper respiratory system) can't filter out black carbon particles because they are so small. **Black carbon particles get deep into the lungs. They can make breathing difficult and can increase allergies and asthma.**

SOLUTION

- ✓ Fewer trucks and buses coming into your neighborhood
- ✓ Upgrading trucks and buses with new emission controls
- ✓ Don't allow trucks and buses to keep their engines running ("idling") when they stop to make deliveries
- ★ Go to <http://www.weact.org> to see other maps and learn more about polluters near you.

WHAT THE MOTHERS & CHILDREN STUDY IS FINDING OUT

PROBLEM: Outdoor air gets inside.

When we put a pollution measuring machine in some of your homes, we found that there was nearly the same amount of black carbon inside your home as there was outside your home. This means that **you and your children are breathing pollution from bus and truck traffic when you are indoors.**

PROBLEM: Pollution comes from inside your home too.

The machines also measured tiny particles of pollution that come from sources inside your home. **We found more tiny particles called PAHs indoors than outdoors.** This means that **pollution is coming from inside homes as well.**

RISK FOR CHILDREN

PROBLEM: PAHs mixed with secondhand smoke makes children's health worse. We found that all babies were exposed to PAHs in the womb. But children exposed to secondhand smoke have a higher risk of health problems. **Babies exposed to PAH chemicals in the womb AND secondhand smoke were typically not as healthy as babies who were exposed only to PAHs.**

Babies exposed to high levels of PAHs

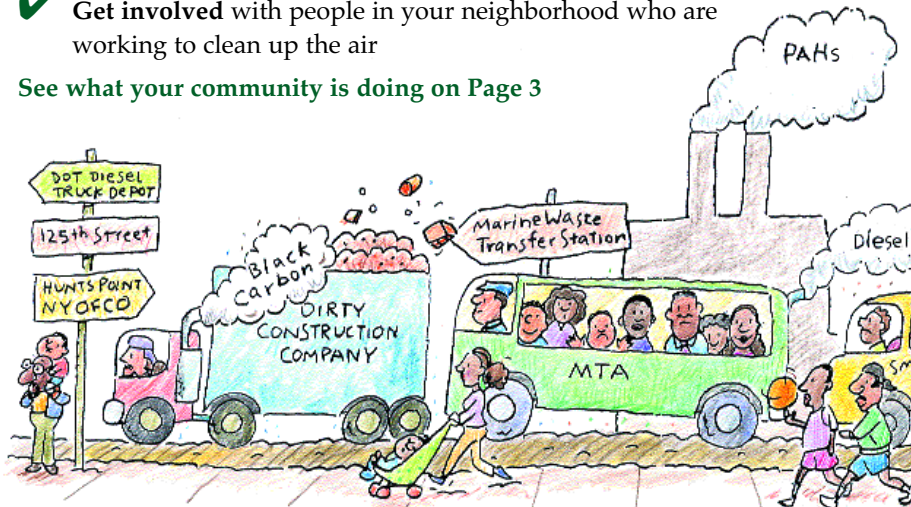
and secondhand smoke **IN THE WOMB** were born smaller than babies exposed to low levels and they also **scored lower on tests of learning ability as 2-year-olds.**

Babies exposed to high levels of PAHs **IN THE WOMB** and secondhand smoke **AFTER BIRTH** coughed and wheezed more as 1-year-olds and they had **more breathing problems and probable asthma diagnoses as 2-year-olds.**

SOLUTION: What you can do

- ✓ Keep cigarette smoke away from you and your children
- ✓ Use a kitchen fan while cooking
- ✓ Limit use of candles and incense in your home
- ✓ Get involved with people in your neighborhood who are working to clean up the air

See what your community is doing on Page 3



WHAT ARE PAHs?

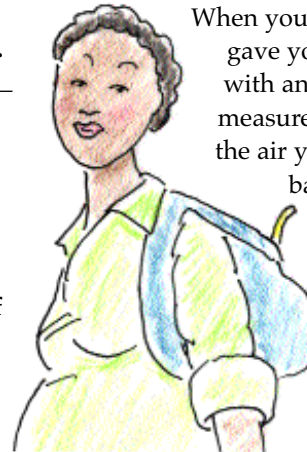
PAHs are tiny particles of pollution that get into the air **when fuel is burned.** They can be very dangerous to children's health.

Where PAHs come from

- cars, trucks, buses
- factories, industry
- home heating
- tobacco smoke
- burned or blackened food
- burning candles, incense

How you helped us measure the PAHs

When you were pregnant, we gave you a backpack to wear with an air monitor inside. It measured the levels of PAHs in the air you breathed. After your baby was born, small samples of blood from you and your baby's umbilical cord also showed how much PAHs from the air were in your bodies.



LOWER YOUR CHILD'S CANCER RISK

People get cancer from a lot of different things including toxic chemicals. Some PAHs are known to cause cancer. The latest finding from the Mothers & Children Study shows that babies exposed to higher levels of PAHs **IN THE WOMB** are born with damage to cells that could increase their risk of cancer. **You can lower your own and your child's risk of getting cancer by following these health tips:**

- ✓ Eat 5 or more fruits & vegetables every day
- ✓ Exercise regularly
- ✓ Join community efforts to improve air quality
- ✗ Do not smoke
- ✗ Ask friends & relatives not to smoke near your child or in your home
- ✗ Avoid excessive weight gain
- ✗ Do not eat burned, charred, or blackened foods—like from a grill

COMMUNITY WINS

These are the successes of 4 community groups:

WE ACT for Environmental Justice

- ▶ WE ACT convinced Mayor Bloomberg to **keep the 135th Street Marine Waste Transfer Station closed**. This means that **320 polluting diesel garbage trucks will not come** into the area every day.
- ▶ WE ACT got the New York City Transit Agency to agree to **put the cleanest buses** in Northern Manhattan, **keep the Amsterdam Bus Depot closed**, and meet regularly with community residents to address concerns about pollution.
- ▶ They protested and **delayed the Metropolitan Transportation Authority's takeover of seven private bus lines**. This means that **1200 more old diesel buses will not come** to depots in Northern Manhattan.



Sustainable South Bronx

Sustainable South Bronx worked with community groups and the government to **cut down on trucks that keep their engines running ("idling") at Hunts Point Market**. Now the 3000 delivery trucks coming into the market daily turn off their engines and hook up to machines for power. This prevents thousands of tons of pollutants from entering the air around Hunts Point Market.



They worked with the neighborhood group *Greening for Breathing* in Hunts Point to **plant 400 trees and got money to plant 375 more** in the area over the next five years.

Mothers on the Move

Mothers on the Move worked with the group *Sustainable South Bronx* and other local groups to **protest the high levels of air pollution coming from the New York Organic Fertilizer Company (NYOFCO)**. NYOFCO is a local plant that makes fertilizer from over 60% of the city's sewage sludge. *Mothers on the Move* convinced the Department of Environmental Conservation to test the plant. Pollution levels were worse than standards set by the Environmental Protection Agency.

The company was **fined, and they were forced to update equipment, and reduce polluting the air**.



Youth Ministries for Peace and Justice

Youth Ministries for Peace and Justice worked with other community groups and a local councilman to **turn 2 vacant lots in the Hoe Avenue area into parks**. Construction on one lot has started and work on the other lot will start this spring.



COMMUNITY GOALS

Improve the Environmental Health of Local Communities

- ▶ Educate local residents about what is bad for their health and the environment
- ▶ Train residents to advocate for themselves and their neighborhoods
- ▶ Work with researchers at nearby universities to study how pollution affects children's health

Less Air Pollution from Diesel Traffic and Waste Transfer Stations

- ▶ Reduce air pollution from trucks and buses
- ▶ Keep the 135th Street waste transfer station closed
- ▶ Reduce the number of power plants
- ▶ Share pollution sources citywide
- ▶ Carefully monitor polluters

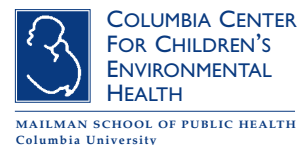
Fewer Traffic Jams and More Open Space for Recreation

- ▶ Replace the Sheridan Expressway with a park and affordable housing
- ▶ Build a walking path around the Hunts Point and Port Morris waterfronts
- ▶ Make more local gardens



Healthy Home
Healthy Child

Columbia Center for Children's Environmental Health
Mailman School of Public Health
Columbia University
100 Haven Avenue, Tower III, Suite 25F
New York, NY 10032
<http://www.ccceh.org>



GET INVOLVED!

It is so easy to get involved to help do this important work you just read about.

- ◆ **Doorknock** and put reading material in apartment buildings to get the word out to lots of people
- ◆ **Talk to your neighbors** about environment and health
- ◆ **Ask neighbors** to sign a petition, attend a meeting or rally, call a local politician, vote
- ◆ **Pay attention to information** you get from community groups

Just call any of the groups listed in the Community Resource Corner and ask how you can help to improve air quality in your neighborhood.

WALK THE WALK

Hike the Heights is a neighborhood walk for clean air and safe streets sponsored by the Columbia Center for Children's Environmental Health, Community Research Group, and WE ACT for Environmental Justice. This **June 25th**, join other moms and children in the Mothers & Children Study, along with family and friends, to "Hike the

Heights." Look for a flyer in your mail with this CLIMB logo. Go to <http://www.ccceh.org> for more information.



COMMUNITY RESOURCE CORNER

Local Groups Working to Improve Air Quality

For A Better Bronx

199 Lincoln Avenue, Bronx, NY 10454
718-292-4344 marian.fabb@earthlink.net

Greening for Breathing

889 Hunts Point Avenue, 4th Floor, Bronx, NY 10474
718-617-4668 elena@ssbx.org

Morningside Heights / West Harlem Sanitation Coalition

100 LaSalle Street, #19F, New York, NY 10027
212-662-6738

Mothers on the Move

928 Intervale Avenue, Bronx, NY 10459
718-842-2224 <http://www.mothersonthemove.org>

Northern Manhattan Improvement Corp.

76 Wadsworth Avenue, New York, NY 10032
212-822-8300 <http://www.nmic.org>

Nos Quedamos/We Stay

811 Cortlandt Avenue, Bronx, NY 10451
718-585-2323

Organizations of Waterfront Neighborhoods

151 West 30th Street, NY, NY 10001
212-244-4664

The Point Community Development Corporation

940 Garrison Avenue, Bronx, NY 10474
718-542-4139 <http://www.thepoint.org>

Sustainable South Bronx

890 Garrison Avenue, Bronx, NY 10474
718-617-4668 <http://www.ssbx.org>

WE ACT for Environmental Justice

271 West 125th Street, Suite 308, NY, NY 10027
212-961-1000 <http://www.weact.org>

Youth Ministries for Peace and Justice

1384 Stratford Avenue, Bronx, NY 10472
718-328-5622 akitwana@ympj.org