Pittsburgh is decades beyond a time when the city’s air was so polluted and dark that streetlights were turned on midday. With booming industry, tourism and industrial growth, the city is also polluted. We may not have such contact reminders of the region’s pollution past, but where are we now? And, importantly, how does the current environment affect our health?

The Pittsburgh area is in general, much cleaner than in the past. The Allegheny County Health Department (ACHD) monitors the air as required by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). All of the pollution levels for the particulate matter, the region’s air pollution, the Allegheny County Health Department monitors the air as required by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). All of the pollution levels for the particulate matter, the region’s air pollution, and the more far-reaching ozone levels are monitored. The ACHD also monitors the air for other environmental health issues such as mold and lead. The ACHD works to keep air quality in this region as clean as possible.

Dr. Clougherty explains that the region still struggles with large sources of pollution. The region is still dominated by emissions from large power plants in the Ohio Valley. Coal works and steel mills are still at work in the area. Like every city, Pittsburgh has a lot of traffic. The more traffic roads and get stuck in certain areas, the more the concentrations of particles build up.

Poor air quality is a concern because it can lead to respiratory problems like asthma, heart problems and even cancer. Some people think staying indoors will reduce their air pollution exposure. Unfortunately, there are many air pollution sources indoors. Cooking on a stovetop, burning candles and smoking put pollutants into the air. There are metals in water that become part of the air pollution in the home. People track pollutants indoors when they don’t remove their shoes. Air inside homes doesn’t move as much as it does outdoors. People are also spending more time indoors.

Even if the region’s air quality has gotten better, Dr. Clougherty has a few recommendations for ways for people to try protecting themselves. She says, “It’s important to know what air quality means in the winter, such as air quality at any time. It’s better for people’s health if they’re not exercising outdoors or allowing children to be outside during those days. If you’re exercising out there, try not to do it on a horse-bikelaid day. Spent time in parks and other ‘clean’ areas air- conditioned places is great in that way.”

The simplest way to protect yourself from the problem is to drive less. When people track pollutants indoors, the per person emissions and pollution in higher-income areas are more likely to put things in their mouths and are closer to the ground, which is important. Poorer, lower-income communities of color, as poor air quality is a concern because it can lead to respiratory problems like asthma, heart problems and even cancer. Some people think staying indoors will reduce their air pollution exposure. Unfortunately, there are many air pollution sources indoors. Cooking on a stovetop, burning candles and smoking put pollutants into the air. There are metals in water that become part of the air pollution in the home. People track pollutants indoors when they don’t remove their shoes. Air inside homes doesn’t move as much as it does outdoors. People are also spending more time indoors. Even if the region’s air quality has gotten better, Dr. Clougherty has a few recommendations for ways for people to try protecting themselves. She says, “It’s important to know what air quality means in the winter, such as air quality at any time. It’s better for people’s health if they’re not exercising outdoors or allowing children to be outside during those days. If you’re exercising out there, try not to do it on a horse-bikelaid day. Spent time in parks and other ‘clean’ areas air-conditioned places is great in that way.”

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