



Press Release

As pollution spikes in Delhi, citizen-led group releases health advisory protocols for children

New Delhi, 23 October 2019: As pollution levels have started soaring in the national capital, #MyRightToBreathe (MRTB), a citizens' group raising awareness on the issue, released a set of protocols for outdoor activities for children in air pollution conditions, called Indian Child Activity Recommendations (ICARe). The protocols designed by US-based Dr Gita Sinha, a public health expert and Laveesh Bhandari, an environmental policy economist and Director of Indicus Foundation, aims to enable schools, childcare centres, event sponsors, families, sports clubs & stadiums and active citizens to rationally plan their children's outdoor activities and help protect them from outdoor air pollution exposure. This is the first in a series which will be released by MRTB as part of their efforts to develop public understanding on #ResponsibleSports.

"Playing sports is essential to a child's development and happiness. Yet every day, children across the country go to school, play, and breathe harmful air. The current poor to severe air quality conditions raise even greater fears for our children's health. There is no immunity to be gained from exposure to air pollution. Air pollution is a known causative factor for disease in children, ranging from respiratory illnesses such as asthma to cognitive and mental health problems including depression and anxiety," said Dr Gita Sinha.

Dr Vivek Nangia, Director-Pulmonology and Chest at Fortis Healthcare said, "Pollution is a complex problem and affects not just lungs but other cognitive and mental faculties as well. Wearing masks can prevent us from inhaling PM2.5 and PM10 particles to an extent but they cannot prevent toxic gases."

The MRTB advisory comes days after the sports minister, Sh Kiren Rijiju, flagged off the Airtel Delhi Half Marathon in the national capital, a 10 km and 21 km sprint which was attended by more than 40,000 people. The two marathons started in the early morning hours which experts claim are more dangerous for health as pollution levels are quite high due to cold dense air and fog trapping pollutants in the lower atmosphere. A [study](#) released last October by the World Health Organisation (WHO) revealed that at least 100,000 children in India below the age of five years died in 2016 due to health complications associated with high outdoor and indoor air pollution.

Jyoti Pande Lavakare, President, Care for Air and a member of MRTB said, "It is bad enough that our government can't clean the air to provide a basic necessity to its citizens. What is even worse is exhorting people to run in toxic air. Whether it is corporates or governments, no one should be having marathons or any outdoor aerobic activity in these sort of AQI levels. I have been writing to the Department of Education since 2015, both as president of Sanskriti school PTA as well as President of

Care for Air to link outdoor aerobic activity to AQI levels, but have never received the courtesy of even a reply.”

At the release of ICARe at a press conference held in Delhi today, representatives of MRTB invited event sponsors and active citizens to use ICARe to protect their children from air pollution and adapt fitness and sports activities in schools and institutions. While there is no guidance issued yet by the government of India for the level of exertion and duration of activity that is advisable in current air conditions, ICARe’s efforts to synthesize existing outdoor activity guidelines and adapt them to official Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) categories for Air Pollution Index (AQI) will work as a constructive health advisory.

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About #MyRightToBreathe:

#MyRightToBreathe (MRTB) is a national citizen-led group mobilising action against air pollution and the climate crisis.

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