

What do we know about the impact of pollution on health?

March 2 2018



Dame Sally Davies urged the public to turn away from single-use disposable plastics. Credit: University of York

In a report on the impact of pollution on health, Chief Medical Officer of England, Dame Sally Davies, has called on the NHS—as one of the world's largest employers—to cut its pollutant footprint and blaze a trail for the rest of the country to follow.

The report examines the impact of chemical, light and [noise pollution](#) on the health of the human population.

Professor Alistair Boxall, from the University of York's Environment Department, co-led the development of a chapter in the report that explores the potential health effects of the cocktail of emerging [chemical pollutants](#), such as nanomaterials and natural toxins, as well as the physical pollutants that all people are exposed to.

The Chapter also looks to the future and describes how climate change might increase the risks of chemical pollutants.

Better monitoring

Professor Boxall said: "We are all aware of the health effects of traditional pollutants such as [nitrogen oxides](#) and particulates emitted from vehicles. However, throughout our life time, we will be exposed to many more chemical and physical pollutants, both man-made and natural, in the air we breathe, the water we drink and the food we eat.

"Our understanding of the impacts of many these of pollutants on human health is poor. We know even less about how these pollutants interact with each other to affect human health.

"The aim of this report is to encourage government and funding bodies to begin to develop programmes to better monitor and study the [health effects](#) of these other pollutants so that we can eliminate exposure to those pollutants that might be causing harm."

More information: Chief Medical Officer annual report 2017: health impacts of all pollution – what do we know?

www.gov.uk/government/publications/health-impacts-of-all-pollution-what-do-we-know

Provided by University of York

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