**Stillbirth risk increased by exposure to air pollution caused by car and industrial emissions, warn experts**

* 23:30, 24 May 20xx
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**Researchers say pollutants including particulates, sulphur dioxide, ozone and carbon monoxide could increase the risk of stillbirth**

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Air pollution may raise the [risk of stillbirth](http://www.mirror.co.uk/all-about/stillbirth), say researchers who have called for tougher controls of car and industrial emissions.

Pollutants involved include particulates, sulphur dioxide, ozone and carbon monoxide, a report in Occupational and Environmental Medicine journal said.

Dr Marie Pedersen of [Copenhagen University](http://www.mirror.co.uk/all-about/university-of-copenhagen), Denmark, said if a link was “confirmed in future studies it would be of major public health importance”.

Stillbirths – deaths after 24 weeks of pregnancy – happen in one in 200 births.

Around 11 babies are stillborn every day in the UK, with around 3,600 cases a year.

Researchers have called for tighter curbs on car exhausts and industrial waste emissions to reduce the risk of air pollutants.

It comes after studies concluded that exposure to ambient [air pollution](http://www.mirror.co.uk/all-about/pollution) heightens the risk of stillbirth.

Following a systematic review of 13 studies on the subject, published in the journal Occupational & Environmental Medicine, the researchers found the risk was particularly heightened during the third trimester of pregnancy.

“Our results provide suggestive evidence that ambient air pollution is a risk factor for stillbirth,” they wrote.

“Pregnant women should be aware of the potential adverse effects of ambient air pollution, although the prevention against exposure to air pollutants generally requires more action by the Government than by the individual.”

They added: “Policies such as control of vehicular emissions, fuel quality improvement and control of industrial waste emissions should be developed and implemented to reduce the risk of air pollutants.”

The air pollutants linked to a heightened risk included: small particulate matter of less than 2.5 microns in diameter (PM2.5), PM10, nitrogen dioxide, sulphur dioxide, [carbon monoxide](http://www.mirror.co.uk/all-about/carbon-monoxide) and ozone.

But they stressed that further research is needed to strengthen the evidence.

Dr Pedersen, of the Centre for Epidemiology and Screening, wrote: “Stillbirth is one of the most neglected tragedies in global health today, and the existing evidence deserves additional investigation.

“If the evidence of an association between ambient air pollution and stillbirth is confirmed in future studies, it would be of major public health importance.

“Although the reported summary effect estimates were relatively small, the ubiquitous nature of ambient air pollution exposure suggests that exposure to ambient air pollution may have a large population-attributable risk for stillbirth.