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HYDERABAD: Ahead of Diwali, doctors sounded an alert for people with asthma and COPD, saying that they needed to exercise extra caution. With temperatures falling, pollutants in the air due to fire crackers promote the formation of smog. This worsens the condition of such patients as well as patients with neurological issues.

“During Diwali, burning of firecrackers increases the concentration of sulphur dioxide and nitrogen dioxide in the atmosphere by up to three times. These increased levels of pollutants combine with the fog to form smog. We are seeing increased cases of breathing problems being reported during and after Diwali,” said an official from the state health department.

Doctors said elderly people, children and those with heart or lung diseases, or susceptible to breathing problems should remain indoors. “Also, they should maintain a low level of physical activity from November 6 till November 8. Increasing awareness among highrisk groups should decrease morbidity,” said Dr Lakshman Babu, pulmonologist, Sunshine Hospitals, Secunderabad.

Smog is created when moisture levels in the atmosphere are high and do not allow tiny particles from pollutants to dissipate. “ Smog worsens the condition of patients with lungs, heart and nervous system disorders. During Diwali, there is a 30-40% rise in cases of wheezing, respiratory diseases, exacerbation of bronchial asthma, and bronchitis,” said Dr Lakshman Babu, pulmonologist, Sunshine Hospitals, Secunderabad.