

Answers from Public Health England to questions from Central West London Healthwatch to Kensington and Chelsea Council and West London Clinical Commissioning Group

Week Two, 4th August 2017

Air quality and environmental concerns

What are some of the potential long term health risks for local residents following the fire?

Residents who were not directly impacted by the fire or suffered significant smoke inhalation and are generally fit and well, are unlikely to experience long-term health problems from temporary indirect exposure to smoke from the fire.

Public Health England has made information available via the internet:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/public-health-advice-following-the-grenfell-tower-fire>

If patients do have any concerns about their symptoms, they should contact their GP directly. If you need urgent healthcare advice and do not have a GP, or your GP surgery is closed, please ring NHS 111. If you need to register with a GP, visit [NHS Choices](#) to find out how.

West London CCG has launched a website to help people affected by the Grenfell Tower fire. It includes information on physical, emotional health and wellbeing and how to get help with coming to terms with the disaster: www.grenfell.nhs.uk/

Toxic chemicals were detected in the blood streams of the survivors what about local residents?

Smoke from any fire is toxic and chemicals that can be present in smoke include carbon monoxide, hydrogen cyanide, hydrogen chloride and hydrogen bromide. However, chemicals produced when the Grenfell Tower fire was burning will not be present now as the fire has been extinguished, and the public is no longer at risk.

The amounts of toxic substances will vary with the specific materials involved in a fire, its temperature and the amount of oxygen. Smoke inhalation may lead to toxins being absorbed into the body, including carbon monoxide and hydrogen cyanide. These chemicals would only have stayed in the body for a short period time and will no longer be present. Residents who were not directly impacted by fire and exposure to smoke are unlikely to have been exposed to elevated levels of toxins within the smoke.

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<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/public-health-advice-following-the-grenfell-tower-fire>

What is the potential risk to the environment and local area following the fire?

The risk to people's health from air pollution around the Grenfell Tower site continues to be low and no asbestos has been detected.

PHE advises that there is currently no wider risk to people's health related to air quality or to the wider environment following the fire, however PHE continues to monitor the situation closely.

During the hot weather the smell from the tower was overwhelming. Have any measures been put in place to ensure that this is not the case again during another warm spell?

The human nose is very sensitive to odours and often detects odorous chemicals at concentrations in air which pose no risk to health, however odours can be unpleasant and affect wellbeing. Many substances that are perceived as odorous are usually present at levels below which there is a direct toxicological effect. Odours can cause a nuisance to the population possibly leading to stress and anxiety. Some people may experience symptoms such as nausea, headaches or dizziness as a reaction to odours even when the substances that cause those smells are themselves not harmful to health.